

How does Superclass rule the Nations?

A Case Study from Pakistan



Agha Iqrar Haroon

How does Superclass rule the Nations?
A Case Study from Pakistan

How does Superclass rule the Nations?
A Case Study from Pakistan

Copyright © 2023 by Agha Iqrar Haroon
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author. For permission requests, contact email:

agha.iqrar@gmail.com

Title Design: Azhar Hafeez

Price: Rs. 1000

ISBN: 978-969-23849-0-2

Distributed by:

Dispatch News Desk Thought Center

Address:

169/D Satellite Town Rawalpindi Pakistan

Email: agha.iqrar@gmail.com

Website: www.dnd.com.pk

How does Superclass rule the Nations?
A Case Study from Pakistan

Agha Iqrar Haroon

Table of Contents

Serial	Content	Page
1	About the Book	1
2	How does Superclass rule the Nations?	6
3	The Revolutionary Nationalism	28
4	The instigator in mob superiority	32
5	Horizontal growth eating up agricultural lands	37

6	Spitting on the King's face	42
7	Nourishing a viper in the bosom	46
8	Thoughts without content are empty	50
9	Responsible Journalism versus Hybrid Journalism	55
10	A Corporate State and the Chief Executive	59
11	Pakistan after a year of the fall of Kabul	63
12	A miscarriage of Justice	69
13	Floods are the "Beginning of Rebirth"	73
14	Legitimate Monopoly of violence	77
15	Laws are enacted for the poor	82
16	Asad Munir, Maryam Nawaz and the NAB	87
17	Political accident does not occur abruptly	92
18	Abrogation of the existing social contract	96
19	Nothing for you to fear, no punishment to come	101
20	What a man dares to do, he should dare to confess	106
21	Political theatre and the poetry of resistance	111
22	Foreign Affairs and politicians	116
23	Political engineering and politicians	122
24	Challenging supremacy of Superclass in Pakistan	127
25	"Made-in-Pakistan Jihad" and the TTP	132
26	Terrorism and the State Institutions	137
27	The "Season of Confessions"	142
28	Politicians surrender to bureaucrats	147
29	Pride is prerogative while fatal	152

	pride is dangerous	
30	The Parliament and the Superclass	157
31	A nation hanging over transmission lines	162
32	Spilling the bean and the half-truth	167
33	Too big to fail” and “too big to jail	171
34	The state is serving only the State Employees	176
35	Crumbling agriculture in Punjab	181
36	Zaman Park battle and the Mob	185
37	About Author	190

Dedicated to:

My parents Agha Alludin Haroon and Nasima Haroon for transferring their courage to their children, enabling us to take risks in voicing the truth.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my friends and foes for becoming the strength that was needed to survive in the

tiresome journey of journalism. I am thankful to Naheed Iqrar for allowing me to enjoy the pleasure of courage to know and courage to write the truth although that practice brought me countless periods of joblessness. I acknowledge my sister-in-law Sabiha Aftab for raising me as a fearless child and always being present like a mother whenever I need support to stand against all odds.

Gratitude

I am grateful to my mentor late Arif Nizami for letting me become a journalist and to Shazia Anwer Cheema whose constant push enabled the publication of this book.

About the Book

Throughout my career as a reporter since 1988, I have covered mainstream politics, civil and military bureaucracy, and foreign affairs. Like any other journalist, I would document significant events in my private diary thinking that someday, I would publish backstage happenings of crucial and significant events in Pakistani politics. Whenever I browsed my diary, I found nothing noteworthy, just different scenes performed by old same characters appearing on stage with new personas. The same cyclostyled script, the same list of accusations against politicians, and almost the same justification to throw them out of power. The same manipulation of rules to gain maximum financial and social benefits by the superclass that comprises civil and military bureaucracy, politicians, higher judiciary and business tycoons.

David Rothkopf, an American scholar in his famous book “Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making”, writes that the network of business, government, military and cultural elites are redefining power in the global era. He is of the view that the superclass runs our governments, our largest corporations, the powerhouses of international finance, the media, and, from the shadows, the world’s most dangerous criminal organizations. Pakistan’s superclass is not different from the global superclass described by David Rothkopf. The difference is that the Pakistani superclass has a larger continuum as it is interceded, intermingled, and intervened through intermixed marriages.

Finding nothing significant in past events, I kept watching the situation, waiting for something unusual to happen. Then the year 2022 arrived and brought a political hurricane. Uncommon happenings started taking place at a

fast pace but not in a linear route rather back and forth, zigzagging like the documenting page of a tremor recorder. The majority of the public interested in politics and the economy considers “Project Imran” a disaster and a nightmare for Pakistan. I think otherwise. The phase that terminated Project Imran was extremely eventful. The charisma of military uniform, spellbinding of state-sponsored anchors and writers, covert operations by intelligence agencies, overt positions by state-sponsored judicial officers, and tools used by superclass for fixing the situation were exposed layer by layer and facts surfaced like the sprouting of grapevine branches under a blooming spring.

The superclass has launched hundreds of projects during the 75 years of Pakistan’s subjugation. I can talk about only three I witnessed as a reporter. “Project Altaf Hussain”, “Project Nawaz Sharif” and “Project Imran”. All three brought drastic changes to Pakistani politics and social fabric. It will take decades to cleanse the garbage they left behind. Only one of these three did not shake the foundations of the country and that was Project Nawaz Sharif. He was submissive and followed the conventional path to protest although he was sent home thrice. He was jailed and his children went through physical torture and psychological traumas. The other two (Imran and Altaf) did not go through the rough treatment that Mian Nawaz Sharif endured.

Project Altaf Hussain brought thousands of dead bodies to the streets of Karachi and an extreme ethnic divide that is still difficult to fill.

Project Imran Khan was a cliché breaker. Making a mockery of the Constitution, politicians and Parliament was its core terms of reference. The Project was assigned to communicate to the youth that all politicians are corrupt and the parliamentary system had failed to deliver;

therefore, a new constitution is needed to replace the Parliamentary system with a Presidential form of government.

I must admit that I am an old-school journalist, trained by strict tutors who follow media ethics and a journalistic code of conduct. It is essential to mention that over last 75 years, the superclass has presented their interests as state interests, leading dissenting voices to develop a psychological phenomenon of self-censorship. As a trained journalist, I refrain from explicitly addressing the issues that are somehow or other craftily intertwined with state sovereignty, and state pillars. Nonetheless, old-school journalists are aware that this is an imposed situation. The dismantling of Project Imran has eventually overturned these self-censored stereotypical hierarchies because the superclass started spilling the beans by admitting that Project Imran was a “failed experiment”.

As mentioned above, the year 2022 brought enormous events. This ignited my urge to document what I had been observing over the last 35 years as a working journalist with firsthand knowledge of events performed on stage and scripted backstage. I decided to share my experiences with readers while self-pledging to anchor my content on academic and philosophical bases rather than being news-driven or event-centric. I decided to opt for the genre of “epistolary” and started writing letters to my readers under the series “A Letter from Prometheus”. This technique was quite popular in the 18th century when epistolary emerged as a popular genre. Letter writers of the 18th century used epistolary to describe and explore the self-experiences as well as realities around them with ideas of sincerity and truth.

In my articles, I placed current events as reference material or a “preamble” to narrate events I had reported in the past. Pakistan’s political history is implausible as it

has no past, no present, and may not have a future either---it is just a continuity of events taking place in a circle. My letters were published as newspaper articles between May 2022 and April 2023. I am placing them with publication dates so future readers even after decades can understand the context -- what was happening and how the writer linked these pieces with the all-time unchanged realities of Pakistan.

The Preamble of the book is titled, "How does Superclass rule the Nations?". I suggest that readers start with this rather than skipping over it if they really wish to understand rest of the book. The Preamble will brief readers that the situations we have confronted through 75 years of suppression were not unique, not out-of-the box, or management of a group of geniuses. Rather it was due to our dearth of knowledge that we could not figure out that all the techniques the superclass had been using against us. The Greek and Romans had already been used such techniques thousands of years ago to subjugate their people. Consequently, you will find in this book the historical references, philosophical approaches and classical techniques every superclass uses to manipulate events, to create new heroes, to humiliate real heroes, and to impose state narratives in a way that the people accept without resistance. I recommend this book to journalists, and students of journalism, mass communication, political science, anthropology, and Pakistan studies.

How does Superclass rule the Nations?

Lack of knowledge and blind trust in the superclass are two weaknesses of a common person and he pays the price in the form of subjugation or becoming a victim. Unfortunately, trust in the superclass has been a part of South Asian DNA and hero-worship is an integral part of our semiotic system thereby we are always in search of the hero to safeguard our souls and mostly this “Avatar” later becomes our subjugator who protects interests of the superclass that keeps coining new dictions to keep ourselves confuse. In the last decade, the superclass had been beating drums that enemies had launched Hybrid War against Pakistan. This narrative was oversold and the majority of us thought that it was something new that Pakistan had been facing while facts were otherwise and this “Hybrid War” narrative had been used against nations and the public for ages.

"An arrow shot by an archer may or may not kill a single person; but skillful intrigue, devised by a wise man, may

kill even those who are in the womb. If the end could be achieved by non-military methods, even by methods of intrigue, duplicity, and fraud, I would not advocate an armed conflict”, says Indian philosopher Chanakya in his book *Arthasastra*.

“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle,” says Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu in his book ---*Art of War*.

The philosophy of propaganda brings us various traditions of thought and a critical review of ancient philosophers who wrote on the art of war and governance. Propaganda had been the most important tool of ancient empires to subjugate their populations.

Famous writer Micah Hanks writes in his article “Propaganda in the Ancient World”:

“Roman builders of the Antonine Wall used vibrantly painted sculptures as a propaganda tool to convey Rome’s superiority over native Scottish tribes. When the wall was built in the mid-2nd century A.D., sculpted blocks depicting Rome’s military exploits were periodically embedded into it at strategic locations”.

Propaganda as a tool for subjugation is found in ancient Greece, Macedonia, and Persia. Alexander the Great used propaganda to “glorify” himself and claimed that he was the son of the powerful Zeus. Alexander produced currency and commissioned architecture, sculptures, and other media which emphasized his new deification, replacing all imagery of the mighty Hercules.

In his book "Propaganda and Persuasion", Garth Jowett writes:

"Alexander the Great was the first to recognize that to maintain cohesion and control over his vast empire, such propaganda symbols could serve as a constant reminder of the various subjugated populations just where the center of power resided. These strategies are still widely used today."

French philosopher Jacques Ellul in his famous book "The Formation of Men's Attitudes" says:

"Propaganda must constantly short-circuit all thought and decision and it must operate on the individual at the level of the unconscious. He must not know that he is being shaped by outside forces... but some central core in him must be reached in order to release the mechanism in the unconscious which will provide the appropriate-and expected-action."

History has shown, the use of propaganda in modern times has borrowed heavily from such ancient practices. To be effective, the appeal of propaganda must not only transcend the ages but also manage to effectively shape our attitudes about the past through its influence. We should have a look at classical examples of propaganda in the ancient world.

If you ever visit Mount Behistun in the Zagros Mountains range, located in the Kermanshah Province of western Iran, you will find the first-ever advertisement Billboard in human history. It is made of limestone having a height of 49 feet, 82 feet wide, and installed at the top of 330 feet high mound. This is considered the first hoarding of advertisement where Darius the Great (r. 522-486 BC) publicized his work and successes in wars in three different

languages--old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian (a variety of Akkadian).

The inscription begins with a brief autobiography of Darius and proceeds by a lengthy sequence of events, nineteen battles in a period of one year (ending in December 521 BC) to put down multiple rebellions throughout the Persian Empire.

The inscription also explains the power of Darius and stories of the persecution of rebellions. This hoarding is called Behistun Inscription. Mount Behistun is located 525 kilometers west of Tehran and I visited this place in 2012. The inscription is situated at a very popular route for traders so travelers of ancient times could read and see this advertisement.

The inscription tells us:

“Darius is (was) kind-hearted but merciless with rebellions. Darius is undefeatable. Every boy in his country is happy because Darius provides security to the population from outsiders and invaders”

If we want to find the first book on war and Propaganda, then we will go to China where the Art of War was written by Sun Tzu. Sun Tzu served King Helü of Wu in the late sixth century BC. The story of the rising of Sun Tzu is very interesting. According to historians, before hiring Sun Tzu, King Helü tested Sun Tzu's skills by ordering him to train a brigade of 360 concubines into soldiers. He selected women who loved to live and have sex with men of their choice without entering into a traditional marriage and they called themselves “Free Citizens” (Zìyóu Gōngmín).

After judging skills and intellect, he raised women as soldiers and used them for overt and covert operations. Since ancient times, Honey Trapping had been in practice

involving the use of romantic or sexual relationships for state espionage, and targets were soldiers, princes, commanders, and important people of the enemy's country. One of the tricks used by these women was to spread fabricated information among the enemy's decision-makers. Honey trapping was also used to collect information about skills, moments, and the preparedness of the enemy. The brigade of Concubines did this work as "Soldiers" for their King.

One of the most popular quotations of the Sun Tzu era says:

"All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when we are able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must appear inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near".

The book Art of War is composed of 13 chapters. Each one is devoted to a different set of skills (or "art") related to warfare and how it applies to military strategy and tactics. Art of War is still known as one of the best books available about War strategy and Philosophy of War.

The book "Art of War" promotes:

War has only one ethic and that is winning the war. Deception is the tool for success in defeating enemies. Gathering knowledge about the enemy is a must before you think to attack the enemy, espionage is the most important tool of statecraft and Propaganda is the art of deceiving the enemy.

Another work of ancient times regarding Propaganda is *Arthashastra* written by Hindu Philosopher Chanakya (c. 350 - 283 BC) who was a professor of political science at Takshashila University which was established around 3000

years back at Taxila Valley situated in Pakistan, around 30 km away from the capital of Pakistan--- Islamabad. Chanakya was the teacher, guide, and mentor of great King Chandragupta Maurya whose empire extended as far as Central Asia.

The Maurya Empire was a geographically extensive power in the South, founded by Chandragupta Maurya in 322 BC. The Maurya Empire was centralized by the conquest of the Indo-Gangetic Plain, and its capital city was located at Pataliputra --modern Patna.

Chandragupta Maurya and Chanakya overthrew the Nanda Empire in 322 BC then they rapidly expanded power westwards across central and western India and by 317 BC the empire had fully occupied northwestern India.

Boesche, Roger while referring to writings of Greek historians in his book "Kautilya's Arthashastra on War and Diplomacy in Ancient India" stated that the Mauryan Empire was raised out of the excellent strategy of propaganda executed by Chanakya and his student Chandragupta for overthrowing the well-established, consolidated, and strong Nanda Empire. The propaganda of Chanakya injected fears, hopelessness, and trust deficit between the population and the Royal family of the Nanda Empire and spread information that Chandragupta was the son of gods and had come from the skies to rule the earth and that he (Chandragupta) is (was) undefeatable.

Book 10 of *Arthashastra* deals with strategies of war. It classifies war into – open, covert, and silent. It specifies how to engage in these wars and detect if one is a target of a covert or silent war.

The book also specifies the appropriateness of all means during the war, whether assassination, discord, spying, false propaganda, or hostility.

After defeating Nanda Empire, the same diction of propaganda was used against other smaller rulers around Nanda Empire and nobody stood against the army of Chandragupta when it was attacked. A paper titled “Similarities and Differences between Military Thoughts of Sun Tzu And Kautilya” discusses Chanakya’s strategy in detail and core points raised in the paper include:

“Chandragupta is (was) undefeatable as he is the son of gods. Inject hopelessness in the enemy’s population through propaganda before the enemy is attacked. Fear of death must be injected into soldiers of the enemy. Travelers and traders should be used for espionage as well as spreading rumors in the enemy’s country and promoting hatred against the ruling elite telling them that the King and his family are sucking the blood of the poor and they are corrupt and selfish. War has no ethics and winning the war is the only goal of statesmanship.

Spies should be well-versed in inciting enemy forces to revolt, spreading false rumors about the enemy, mixing poison in the enemy’s food supply, poisoning their drinking water, setting fire to the enemy’s camp, and bringing havoc and destruction, or if necessary, even assassinating the enemy leaders. Secret agents can destroy high officers in the enemy army either with poison or with “love-winning medicines”.

If we look at today’s world, all ancient strategies of war-winning and propaganda are still in use and actually. Major components of propaganda had been:

Create trust deficit among social groups and develop fault lines in the society of enemy. Spread rumors and hopelessness among the population before actually attacking the enemy. Use spy Art and honey trapping for getting maximum information about the weakness and strengths of the enemy. Promote the idea that opponents

are corrupt and selfish and they must be removed. Attacking the army will bring positive changes in the attacking country after winning the war and will provide more social and economic opportunities. Empire is benevolent and protects its population from outsiders and invaders. Collateral damage is part and parcel of change etc.

When we go through the work of philosophers who dealt with propaganda and Governance in the last 3,000 years, we find that hybrid war is not a new concept as many social anthropologists believe today. Creating fears, hopelessness, a deficit of trust among the masses against their rulers, and developing fault lines among social groups are old techniques and users usually propagate that the military might save the nations from foreign enemies and men in hauberks were honored as heroes because they could protect the public from foreign invasion. This is the reason that Romans and Greek invested hugely to portray their soldiers as their heroes.

"Truth, soon we shall either kill the barbarians or else we are bound to be killed ourselves".

These are words narrated to King Leonidas when arrived at Thermopylae to his comrades in arms and written by historian Herodotus.

Anybody who reads this para is overwhelmed by the bravery of King Leonidas--- and this is (was) what Herodotus wanted from the listener or the reader.

Troy, Helen of Troy, Trojan, Trojan Horse, 300 Spartans, Darius the Great, Alexander the Great, and many more words and names look immortal in human history because historians and poets like Homer, Herodotus, Ptolemy, and Arrian of Nicomedia made them immortal through their literary work.

Interestingly, the majority of such immortal characters are related to battles and wars while myths and metaphysical aspects are surrounding them. Martyrdom and Bravery are tagged with Heroes while Lust, Deceit, and Cowardness are characteristics of losers and villains.

Greek and Roman poets and writers knew the art of influencing the human mind and creating a perception of readers and listeners according to their (writers) own choices. Fascinating myths and metaphysical events lure the human mind easily therefore their work is a blend of Myths and Realities.

Crafting Heroes and Villains were the most popular job of poets, historians, and philosophers of the Greek and Roman empires. The reputational approach was used to create a theory of martyrdom to affect the collective memory of the respective era.

If a student of communication and propaganda reads “The Iliad”, he or she can understand that this epic poem which has 15,693 lines is the best work of propaganda, therefore I consider Homer the “father of propaganda”. There is no doubt that “The Iliad” and “The Odyssey” have an enormous influence on the history of literature and human perception although critical and analytical thinking readers appropriately reject the events of “The Iliad” and “The Odyssey” but readers keep reading them.

Since “The Iliad” is a story of war, therefore it glorifies War Heroes.

“Let me not then die ingloriously and without a struggle, but let me first do some great thing that shall be told among men hereafter.” -- The Iliad

In the above-mentioned quotation, one can understand that Homer gives us a martyr's image by giving emotional

weight to social ideas about death and sacrifice. You can find several such parts in the Iliad as:

"Why so much grief for me? No man will hurt me down to Death, against my fate. And fate? No one alive has ever escaped it, neither brave man nor coward, I tell you - it's born with us the day that we are born." --- The Iliad

"Like the generations of leaves, the lives of mortal men. Now the wind scatters the old leaves across the earth, now the living timber bursts with the new buds and spring comes round again. And so with men: as one generation comes to life, another dies away." ---- The Iliad

"Any moment might be our last. Everything is more beautiful because we're doomed. You will never be lovelier than you are now. We will never be here again." ---The Iliad

Homer brilliantly introduced myths surrounding the Fall of Troy but he focused on natural qualities of human psychology like the anger (of Achilles), the pity, terror, and horror of war as well as its thrills and delights. Homer presented the clash of fundamental approaches in human psychology. Achilles is a symbol of straightforward martial power, anger, and prowess of directly attacking the enemies while Odysseus is a master of wisdom or cunningness.

After Homer, historian Herodotus is the second most successful propagandist and he had been the main source of providing us information about historic characters like Croesus, Cyrus, Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius, and Xerxes, and the events like the battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, Artemisium, Salamis, Plataea, and Mycale.

Herodotus (484 – c. 425 BC) was born in Halicarnassus in the Persian Empire (modern-day Bodrum, Turkey). He is

known for having written the book “The Histories” which is a detailed record of the origins of the Greco-Persian Wars.

Herodotus used almost the same techniques that were used by Homer for creating heroes like “300 Spartans” while narrating about the Battle of Thermopylae against the Persian army that took place around 480 B.C.

Herodotus tells us that although Spartan King Leonidas lost the battle, his death at Thermopylae was seen as a heroic sacrifice because he sent most of his army away when he realized that the Persians had outmaneuvered him. Three hundred of his fellow Spartans stayed with him to fight and die.

Ptolemy (367 BC – January 282 BC) was a companion and historian of Alexander the Great who became ruler of Egypt, part of Alexander's former empire. He was the founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty which ruled Egypt until the death of Cleopatra in 30 BC, turning the country into a Hellenistic kingdom and Alexandria into a center of Greek culture.

Ptolemy himself wrote an “eyewitness history” of Alexander's campaigns but it was lost.

The Histories of Alexander the Great is the only ancient Latin biography of Alexander the Great. It was written by the Roman historian Quintus Curtius Rufus in the 1st century AD, but the earliest surviving manuscript comes from the 9th century. We get information about Alexander through this work but his battles and journey to the subcontinent are not included in the details in this work.

In the second century AD, a historian Arrian of Nicomedia wrote “Anabasis of Alexander” by using some content from Ptolemy’s writing. Arrian cites Ptolemy by name in his

work. He once names Ptolemy as the author "whom I chiefly follow" for narrating the campaigns of Alexander.

The Anabasis of Alexander has seven books telling us about the campaigns of Alexander the Great, specifically his conquest of the Persian Empire between 336 and 323 BC.

Arrian says that the Battle of the Hydaspes was fought between King Porus of the Hindu Paurava kingdom and Alexander the Great in 326 BC.

Arrian says that Alexander attempted to cross the river (most probably the Jhelum River) during a monsoon despite the great Indian force waiting for him on the opposite side. The battle was the result of Alexander's mission to extend his empire toward India. The battle opened a gateway to develop Greek and Indian cultures that lasted many centuries.

If we read the works of Homer, Herodotus, Ptolemy, and Arrian of Nicomedia, we find them as "myth-mongers", creating legends and fables. Their works are still famous and read therefore we understand that documentation of war histories needs a mix of realities and myths and there is no line we can draw between what is Truth and what is untrue while reading the works of war historians.

Another feature we find in their work is that eternal power or metaphysical power (gods etc) helps the Heroes of their choice. Their Heroes are brave and are not afraid of death. Their Heroes are good planners, executors, and tireless. The quest for sacrifice for the motherland or for a vibrant reason is in the blood of their heroes. The appearance of their heroes includes tallness, wide-shoulder, rough and tough hands, a wider forehead with thoughtful eyes, and softness on the face.

If we look at today's world, the above-mentioned qualities are still in use to make any personality a War Hero through the Art of communication and techniques of propagation. To influence human thinking, Romans and Greeks extensively use inductive and deductive logic for building their propagation design, and "Approximate Truth" had been very useful for them.

The knowledge of the "Classical Philosophy of Science", can help to understand that this technique had been a part of propaganda in ancient times and had been used also in the process of "Building of Belief".

The technique is difficult to understand for the common man and he can have no idea that he had already been the victim of this technique. However, it is not difficult for a student of Philosophy to recognize this game of placing Truth as Fact and using Approximate Truth as Truth.

Truth, Fact, and Approximate Truth have been critical issues for philosophers as well as for scientists and some propagandists use these notions as their tools.

Philosophers are interested in gathering issues involving the concept of truth. An initial issue is to decide what sorts of things can be true. Is Truth a property of sentences (which are linguistic entities of written and spoken language), or is Truth a property of propositions (nonlinguistic, abstract, and timeless entities)?

The principle issue is: What is Truth? The most important theories of Truth are the Correspondence Theory, the Semantic Theory, Deflationary Theory, the Coherence Theory, and the Pragmatic Theory but every theory has its additional issues.

Truth

In simple words, Truths are those things that are not simply acknowledged but must be discovered, or created. If I say "clouds bring rain," and I have strong reasoning for the affirmative of this statement, then it is believable that clouds really bring rain, that is a reality. However, if another individual possesses strong reasoning (having a background of experiences where clouds did not bring rain) for the negative, and because of this reasoning they believe that clouds sometimes do not bring rain, then that is also a reality. If we are debating the possibilities of something, and my reasoning appears stronger than my friends, they may choose to accept my belief that clouds bring rain. If they do, then the existence of rain with clouds is true as the nonexistence of rain. Truths, as opposed to Facts, are much more fluid and flexible than their empirical counterparts.

Approximate Truth

Approximate Truth is, however, a vague notion, and specification of quantity terms and of a sense of approximation are needed to make precise applications of it. The suitability of both vocabulary and sense of approximation depends on the subject matter, and their selection is a partly empirical matter that raises complex issues. In light of the number of common inferences which are not continuous, we also need to be concerned about the indiscriminate use of deductive logic to derive consequences from approximately true theories. Approximate Truth represents a truth that is not testified 100 percent but is accepted and acknowledged.

Fact

A Fact is almost the opposite of Truth and Approximate Truth. Truth and Approximate Truth is (are) the truth unless proven false but Fact is what cannot be proven otherwise.

A Fact is a reality that cannot be logically disputed or rejected. If I say "fire is hot," I don't care how great your reasoning skills are, if you touch fire your skin will burn. Now when I say this, I am not speaking the truth, I am saying a Fact. If you say "fire is not hot," you are not lying, you are incorrect. Facts are concrete realities that no amount of reasoning will change. Facts are not discovered, Facts are not created, Facts are simply acknowledged and could be testified physically.

The Technique

Propagandists can use Approximate Truth to tag "A" as a villain (bad) because nobody can determine facts about him through scientific tests. Propagandists then tactfully use Deductive Reasoning to reach a logical true conclusion of their own choice in the process of developing Approximate Truth because, through this technique, their given Approximate Truth is testified through a logical process.

Deductive reasoning, or deduction, starts out with a general statement, or hypothesis, and examines the possibilities to reach a specific, logical conclusion---Syllogism.

The scientific/research/logical methods use deduction to test hypotheses and theories. "In deductive inference, we hold a theory, and based on it we make a prediction of its consequences.

Prediction, Possibility, and Assumption

We predict what the observations should be if the theory is correct. We go from the general — the Theory — to the specific — the Observations.

Deductive reasoning usually follows:

First, there is a premise, then a second premise, and finally an inference.

A common form of deductive reasoning is a syllogism, in which two statements — a major premise (proposition) and a minor premise — reach a logical conclusion. For example, the premise "Every A is B" could be followed by another premise, "C is A". Those statements would lead to the conclusion that "C" is "B". Syllogisms are considered a good way to test deductive reasoning to make sure the argument is valid.

For example, "All men are mortal. Ahmad is a man. Therefore, Ahmad is mortal." For deductive reasoning to be sound, the hypothesis (First proposition/premise) must be correct/factual. It is assumed that the premises, "All men are mortal" and "Ahmad is a man" are true. Therefore, the conclusion is logical and true. In deductive reasoning, if something is true of a class of things in general, it is also true for all members of that Class----Universal truths.

But if one premise is false and the second is true then it will get a logical answer but may be untrue.

A state buildups logical case that anybody who does not respect state writ kills people, destroys state property, and fights against state institutions is a terrorist. Now "A" who is a freedom fighter is placed as the second premise and it is stated that "A" is fighting against state institutions, killing people, and destroying state property, therefore, "A" is a terrorist. Logically it is true but circumstantially it is untrue.

Therefore, we understand that facts are those elements that can be tested scientifically but in human relations, the formative fact is hindmost and we have to follow the diction of true or untrue and this process can always be untrue even if it looks True.

Building a narrative against someone as a terrorist, a traitor, corrupt, a stooge, etc. is very simple if you can develop Approximate Truth against someone.

Propaganda as a communication tool has several definitions with multiple connotations and denotations but in simple words, this technique is for the dissemination of information, loaded arguments, rumors, half-truths, and lies to influence the human mind.

Two major kinds of propaganda had widely been used by the Greek and Roman Empires--Overt Propaganda and Covert Propaganda and both kinds had several types, techniques, dictions, tools, and rules.

Official announcements informing the public that King "A" has decided to hang whosoever will break State laws are components of Overt Propaganda. In this propaganda --- sender (the King or State) is clear to the receiver (Public). Now we can use the examples given above of Overt Propaganda for Covert Propaganda. King "A" hires a pious man who overtly is against the King. He says to people that King "A" is callous and he kills everybody who breaks laws made by King. Portraying "callous" was not something derogatory for King because every King was known as callous but fear of death is (was) injected into the public if the public broke rules made by King. In this propaganda, the sender is not King or his official men, rather the tool (sender) is a person who is not popular as a supporter of the King (rather against the King). Therefore, the receiver (people) will get the message as an independent judgment, not as a projected statement from King "A". But in reality, King "A" sent his message to the population covertly because the sender (pious man or philosopher) was not an open State tool.

Major tools of Propaganda in ancient times include:

Suggestion:

Telling people that King “A” is Benevolent or in some cases Ruthless (if it is a time of purging opponents or uprisings etc.) is an example of Suggestion. In the political arena; suggesting “A” is corrupt or “B” is better than “A” is also a Suggestion tool of propaganda.

Stimulation:

No other King is better than (our) King “A” is a statement that propagandist tries to stimulate others to accept without challenging his own assertions because the population has no knowledge of other countries and other kings. Stimulation always needs a forceful statement without having any chance of asking a question.

The idea of using suggestion or stimulation as propaganda is (was) that it will lead the public to accept a proposition even though there are no logical grounds for accepting it and no data available for comparative study. Therefore, the propagandist has stimulated his statement to others without challenging their own assertions or acting as he wants them to do by making broad and positive statements, by presenting his statements in simple and familiar language.

Virtue-by-Association and Virtue-by-Hereditry:

King was always portrayed as powerful, and beautiful, belonging to high prestige family, having a lineage of a blue-blooded family, and having gifted power from gods. His companions were also portrayed as intelligent, noble, philosophers, etc. This technique was used to snub the population psychologically that no common man can become King because “King is Born King” and he was sent by gods to rule common men. This technique had been

very helpful to purge and subjugate intrigues and uprisings against Greek and Roman kings.

Art

Another popular tool of propaganda used during the Roman Empire was the usage of Art. The term “Imperial Propaganda” explains that emperors used art in Rome between 30 BC and 330 AD for establishing their power over an ever-expanding empire and to influence public opinion. Rulers used a variety of means including patronage of sculptures (Statue Makers) who always crafted faces of Kings and Queens beautiful, soft, and innocent. This propaganda is quite popular in the modern era and you always find the best photos of rulers in newspapers.

The objects (statues, paintings, carvings, frescos) from the Roman imperial period are often political statements reflecting the powerful government, military, society, economy, and daily life. As a result of imperial objects being on display citizens also came to follow current fashions and artistic styles, and aspired to gain the social status necessary to showcase particular items. In addition to emperors and citizens promoting their own status, these forms of propaganda also helped to unify the empire, promote Pax Romana (Roman Peace), and inform Roman citizens of current events.

George Orwell in “All Art Is Propaganda” says:

“A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?”

I believe that contemporary propagandists while producing any content, material, and object, performing art usually follow rules introduced by Greek and Roman empires and described by Orwell and these guidelines harvest a theme of ---- All Art Is Propaganda.

The following articles can help to understand that superclass while controlling all sources and resources of power uses almost all popular techniques to manipulate our thinking by spreading confusion about what is right and wrong eventually superclass steals the power of meaning-making from our perception and then we are at the mercy of the superclass

The Revolutionary Nationalism

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan in March 2022 claimed he was fighting against western powers; particularly the USA which, according to him, had taken away the sovereignty of Pakistan.

For accusing the Pakistan Army to be part of a conspiracy against Pakistan, he gave examples from the rules of Gen

Ziaul Haq and Gen Musharraf, who according to him had been working for the interests of Washington instead of protecting Pakistan's sovereignty.

After propagating that Pakistan was not a sovereign country, he sold a dream of an independent state if he could be allowed to rule again, therefore he said his struggle against the PDM government was actually the struggle for "real Independence" because Pakistan was not an independent country. He categorically said that India had a sovereign foreign policy but Pakistan had never enjoyed this pleasure.

His thoughts look novel, exciting, attractive, and honest for those who do not have an idea of a long history of different political philosophies that spread mostly in Europe and South America and died down after disastrous outcomes. The dream that Imran Khan sold was not different from what the political philosophy of Revolutionary Nationalism believed.

The political philosophy of Revolutionary Nationalism brought several nationalist political movements aiming to achieve so-called "independence" from "foreign dependence" in Europe, South America, and Africa.

Born in France, this political philosophy strongly influenced revolutionary forces against the established order of their eras. Some of the known movements were the French Revolution, the Irish Republicans engaged in armed struggle against the British Crown, the movement against French rule in Vietnam, the Mexican Revolution, Benito Mussolini, and the Italian Fascists, the Autonomous Government of Khorasan, Augusto Cesar Sandino in Nicaragua, the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement in Bolivia and several minor movements of African independence, that came to the surface during the 1950s and 1960s.

Leaders of these movements first indoctrinated their followers that they were not independent and that some social groups or foreign powers were ruling them directly or indirectly. The second phase was preparing their followers to break down the system and the third phase

was to create a new system. The majority of movements evaporated after creating unrest and chaos between phases two and three. The majority of leaders left the countries and got asylum in other countries and some of them were killed by their followers when nothing came out of the disastrous breakdown of the administrative systems of their countries. One similarity in all nationalist revolutionary movements was the simplicity of their leaders. They were from the masses and they lived with the masses.

Imran Khan ruled for 42 months and he did not realize that country was not sovereign and the idea of true independence till such time when he lost the majority in the House and was voted out.

His political opponents believed that the idea of a US-sponsored conspiracy came to his mind when he had already lost his majority in the House and now he was trying to spread anarchy in the country because he did not want to see anybody sitting in the Prime Ministerial chair except him.

There is no doubt that demanding resignation from sitting governments has been the core of his politics. He did the same in 2014 but the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif did not bow down to his demand though Imran Khan sat outside Parliament building for 128 days. If we talk about his 2014 *Dharna* (sit-in), I witnessed that participation never surpassed the number of 20,000 protestors although he had the courtesy of almost everybody, and virtually the entire media was manipulating information in his favor, portraying 20,000 people as 200,000. The results of all such manipulation were zero: no resignation, no change in government, and elections held as per schedule.

The then PML(N) government did not resign even though the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif was disqualified by the Supreme Court. The PML(N) government completed its tenure under the then new PM Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. General Elections were held as per schedule in 2018 and Imran Khan formed the government with a margin of one vote. He failed to bag a simple majority needed for his rule

but he managed to form the government through extensive post-election engineering. After being voted out of National Assembly Imran Khan launched a well-planned protest campaign against the sitting government and on March 25, 2022, he entered Islamabad with his *Azadi* March after the Supreme Court ordered the multiparty government to ease its administrative grip over the situation and let him enter Islamabad. Having the entire administrative machinery of the KPK government, including the helicopter of the KPK Chief Minister, Imran Khan virtually failed to enter Islamabad with 15,000-plus protesters though he was claiming he would gather two million people. The result was simple: he went to his Banigala residence, had a rest for a day, and went back to Peshawar which is his base camp nowadays.

He held a press conference in Peshawar on May 27, 2022, and threatened the government to resign otherwise he would announce another protest within a week. He wrote a letter to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for getting approval for the free movement of his protesters so he could come again to Islamabad and pitch a tent village and do laundry outside the Supreme Court building as he did in 2014.

Constant pressure through *dharnas* (sit-ins) and pitching legal battles made the sitting government virtually non-operational therefore foreign investments could be discouraged and the government under pressure became vulnerable in front of foreign lending agencies like the IMF. His cipher conspiracy gave desirous results to Imran Khan who played well against the PDM government that failed to establish any anti-Imran narrative and Imran emerged as one of the strongest anarchist leaders in the history of Pakistan.

"The lion is most handsome when looking for food." — Rumi

Article was published on May 30, 2022

The instigator in mob superiority

Two reports of mob lynching of two Ashrafs—one Ashraf in Patoki and another Ashraf in Gujranwala, within less than three months, remind me of several mob lynching and mob justice cases and the smooth acquittal of a majority of accused. From the Mashaal Khan case to the Sialkot lynching of a Sri Lankan engineer, the death sentences are handed to less than six accused while electronic evidence (videos and so on) showed over one hundred persons were involved in these two separate brutal crimes.

On March 21, one Mohammad Ashraf known as Ashraf *Papparwala* (Rice cracker vendor) had an argument with guests at a wedding ceremony in Pattoki and he was lynched to death inside the marriage hall. The guests-cum-killers enjoyed their lunch after killing him and placing his dead body in the corner of the hall where they were enjoying their wedding event. The incident came to the limelight when footage, allegedly showing Ashraf's body near an apathetic crowd that continued eating at the wedding, went viral on social media and aroused public anger at the callousness on display. I fear the fate of killers would not be different from that of the Mashaal Khan case or the Sialkot lynching case.

We also remember that two real brothers were lynched in Sialkot in 2010 and the gory incident continued for several hours and their dead bodies were also beaten up.

Life goes on, and so does the brutality. On May 30, Muhammad Ashraf known as Ashraf *Kabaria* (Junkman) died in police custody after a violent mob tortured him for allegedly stealing a motorbike. The video of the incident shows a violent mob brutally torturing Ashraf before

handing him over to the police. The police, in spite of taking him to the hospital for medical aid, took him to the police station where he succumbed to his wounds.

The first case of mob lynching I covered was of Master Aslam in Gujranwala where a teacher was lynched to death in front of his seven-year-old daughter and his wife within minutes. Killers tried to make the case a blasphemy issue but the circumstantial evidence I collected was enough to understand that it was a personal vendetta and it was a sheer case of brutal killing but painted as a religious issue. Years after, the court also confirmed the credibility of my investigation. Even in this case in which over 100 persons lynched Aslam to death, only four accused were penalized and I do not remember what was the ultimate end of the case and whether anyone was hanged in this case or not.

Mob justice and mob lynching have been important issues for writers to comment on and for psychologists to find out what kind of state of mind triggers such horrific incidents. Sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists link such behavior with animal instincts we all possess on a different level.

There are many popular viewpoints explaining mob justice and mob lynching. The majority of us believe that aggression that comes from inequality in society, lack of education, disbelief in social norms and ethics, mistrust of the judicial system, and desire to do something good against bad are some of the main components that can be further expanded. I would not comment on the above-mentioned possible reasons that may trigger mob justice or mob lynching. We know mob lynching had been popular even in developed societies of North America and Europe and the 1960s was a shocking era when we document mob lynching in Europe and the United Kingdom. I read several pieces of research and academic papers to understand the mob lynching phenomenon after the Sialkot lynching as a student of social sciences because I felt that lynching takes place when a large size mob gathers. Is it the "Mob Superiority" behind acting anything wishes to? Somehow or other the answer is Yes. We usually watch a large-scale

protest scene where the mobs can remove barricades and even remove huge containers on their way and stand against tear gas or water cannons for several hours. However, when the size of the mob starts shrinking, aggression goes down because “Mob Superiority” is lost and then intelligent riot police start action against scattered smaller groups. Riot police charge them in a form of a bigger mob than the protestors having its own “Mob Superiority”.

One of the most interesting research I read about Mob Superiority is the work of Stuart Stevenson published in February 2021. His paper “The psychodynamics of lynch mobs: Grouping, ganging or lynching” helps us to understand the “mob mentality” the method of force that is as old as humanity, and the group dynamics that ‘harnesses the mob’.

He believes that the group phenomenon that drives a lynching is the product of an extremely complex combination of external and internal events. Moreover “Mob Superiority” instantly brings “Moral Superiority” and the mob believes that whatever it is doing is morally right. This state of mind provides moral justification for the assault or murder of an individual who is identified as belonging to one group— usually a marginalized, weak and resource-less, or hated group— by a group of individuals or a gang who belong to, or represent, another group and who believe they have an unofficial mandate to exact justice. This ‘justice’ can go as far as a public execution.

Though the work of Stuart Stevenson is interesting and useful for an understanding of mob justice I would prefer to include the work of Charles-Marie Gustave Le Bon (May 1841 – December 1931) for getting a deep understanding of the psyche of the Mob or Crowd.

His work “The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind” published in 1895 is still considered by researchers as one of the best pieces on “Crowd psychology”.

He believes that any large group of people develops a focus as a “crowd” when all those involved accept one dominant idea and if they have a common goal, the stage

is set for the crowd to act. The common goal can be anything– lynching someone or removing barricades from their way to attack any building. There is a catch in his work also that needs to be taken into account when someone is working to review any act conducted by the mob. Gustave believes that the influential ideas that motivated a crowd to act never emerge from within the crowd but come from an external source. This “someone” I can call “instigator”. He believes that a motivated crowd is impulsive and has lost the capacity to reason and indulges in a primitive, animal-like state of mind. Therefore, we can say that in the majority of cases of attacking state property or lynching a man, there is at least one “instigator” who is not part of the crowd.

I am not saying that Gustave’s theory is the ultimate one because several theories of crowd behavior have come after Gustave’s work and some sociologists and psychologists today believe that individuals in a crowd are very aware of their actions. It is the power of being part of a group with which they identify and an awareness of the power the mass of individuals can exert that inspires them to action. However, all new theories do not rule out the possibility of an instigator triggering the situation from the outside of the group.

The lynching of a human is the cruelest and most painful act we observe in the 21st century but the reality is that the animal instinct of humans lives inside them– always and everywhere!

*“Friends, be men. Let the sense of shame from all men”
Homer—Iliad*

Article was published on June 5 2022

Horizontal growth eating up agricultural lands

The Ukraine crisis has triggered a debate that countries must not be dependent on others for food security because Ukraine, which provides over 60 percent of wheat to the European market, is closed virtually to transport wheat outside of its land.

Pakistan bought over 60 percent of its last year's important wheat from Ukraine. The Food and Agriculture Organization has already released a warning that the global situation of food security is in danger. Such statements are partially political to accuse Russia of causing world hunger and partially true because the suspension of Ukrainian wheat supplies would be a disaster for many. Ukraine is known as the breadbasket of Europe as years ago the Subcontinent was. Alas, agricultural land resources and food security have become two serious issues for Pakistan in the last three decades.

According to statistics, agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan's economy and it employs 45 percent of the labor force, contributes 21.4 percent to the gross domestic product, and provides food to a huge population. The decrease in agricultural lands is technically increasing food insecurity. Punjab, the most advantaged for producing food, has become the most disadvantaged province because real estate tycoons found in the leveled lands of Punjab the available lands to convert into "files".

This practice has nothing to do with population growth and increasing demand for housing because the price of plots is

beyond the reach of the majority of our population. The horizontal growth of housing has already eaten out fertile agricultural lands around all big cities because real estate tycoons are so strong that all laws bow down in front of them.

They actually rule the country, manipulate political developments, and influence everybody that is important in the system. Just look at Multan where thousands of mango trees are cut and sold to level agricultural lands for a new housing society and nobody dares to raise the question.

We have seen this before in Gujranwala. Agriculture lands are being converted into Five-Marla, 10-marla, one-kanal files. Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, and Gujranwala divisions are the most affected areas where agriculture fields, that produced wheat, sugarcane, and other seasonal crops and vegetables and fodder for animals are now just "plot files". The most unfortunate part of this whole game is that money earned out of files is not fully coming into the economic circle of the country and only thousands of people are making billions of rupees by converting farmland into housing colonies.

A report published last year by the Turkish News Agency (Anadolu Agency) indicates that real estate developers offer farmers triple the market price, a temptation hard to ignore, and even use administrative and political power if any farmer tries to refuse to sell land.

Alas, nobody is here to help those who do not want to sell their land. In the Rawalpindi division, several farmers had been murdered in the last 20 years over this issue when many villagers refused to sell their lands to tycoons for their housing societies. The reality is simple: farmers who used to produce their own food are now buying wheat, flour, and vegetables from the market

According to a report of the Kisan Board of Pakistan, around 20-30 percent of fertile land in Punjab province, which produces 65 percent of the country's total food requirement, has been converted into industrial units and housing schemes. Only in the Lahore division, 70 percent

of agricultural land has been converted to housing and industrial units, followed by Gujrat where the ratio is 60 percent. Unfriendly Indo-Pak relationships are a factor that border areas are still providing food because they cannot be converted into housing societies due to security reasons but in the future laws can be amended to pave the way for the expansion of several housing societies till the borderline between Pakistan and India.

The city-wise situation according to the Kisan Board report is that in Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sheikhupura, and Kasur, 30-40 percent of fertile land has been sold to real estate developers and industrialists in the last five years. The landholding ratio is still satisfactory in southern Punjab and the northern districts of Sindh, which together are currently producing more than 50 percent of the country's wheat, sugarcane, and cotton. I fear soon real estate tycoons would move to other parts of southern Punjab for developing new housing societies after the successful sales in Multan.

One can say that this disproportionate conversion is due to the demand for housing units for disproportionate population growth. Yes, it can be a reason but plot prices in housing societies that have eaten up agricultural lands are not in breach of a common man in Pakistan. Plots and even files are so expensive in these housing societies that only the rich class is playing in this field. The minimum rate of a five-Marla plot in such housing societies is over Rs. 5 million. Can a poor and lower-middle-class person have enough money for a five-marla plot?

Businessmen dealing in these housing societies are mostly serving retired civil and military men who had been in the business of car dealing just 30 years ago. This business is run, owned, and looked after by a particular class therefore it is not helping the overall economy of the country. How can we demand or expect small farmers not to sell their lands when such a strong group, along with real estate tycoons, is in the business?

The PTI government, by using the term "economic growth" provided exceptional support to this including amnesty of

investing in real estate, by announcing that the government would not ask any question about the source of income if someone would invest in the construction industry. Instead of providing low-cost housing schemes for the poor as promised in the PTI manifesto, favors were provided to powerful, rather almost “untouchable”, real estate czars.

In Pakistan, the horizontal growth of housing units is directly linked with the horizontal growth of their businesses that are calling the shots in the real estate world, and they are expanding products and services by announcing new housing societies. They are not providing low-cost housing units to a country where around 30 percent of the population is living under the poverty line and where the lower middle class is already fighting hard to avoid the “extinct phase”. The import of edibles is surely further hurting the poor and middle-income social classes while the powerful are minting money by eating out agricultural lands.

Playing havoc with the food security of the country while providing almost nothing to the majority of the population of the country, real estate tycoons are beyond the law of land and they can shave away jungles, fertile lands, and fruit gardens with direct help of the state and laws always go in their favor.

Article was published on June 13 2022

Spitting on the King's face

In our junior school, we had a class fellow who was in the habit of spitting on the faces of others and then running away. Despite complaints, no action ever took place against him for his indecent and obnoxious behavior because his mother was a senior teacher and an influential woman.

In responding to the complaints, she always had some justifications for her son's acts. One day, he spat on the face of the son of a provincial secretary. Enough was enough —there were serious consequences and 15-day-long scenes. He was rusticated from school but he got readmitted within 15 days and we were told that the matter had been amicably resolved between the two families.

He came back into the class with new ambitions of spitting on everybody he wished. He was now more confident than ever knowing that nobody could dare to question his conduct and he was somehow or other justified in this new confidence. I left this school in the 1980s and moved to another so I did not have much information about him and his rising princely habits. Life went on. In the 1990s when I was a crime reporter in an English daily, an old school friend contacted me and informed me that our influential lady teacher was ruthlessly beaten up by her son and she

was hospitalized. He asked for my help in this case and told me that the prince had almost killed her. The first sentence that came out of my mouth was, "Good grief, at last, the prince got hold of the Queen. "

You can find several princes and many queens around you and also some princes and kings too. They are in every society and they have similar personality traits but different fates. When a prince does something to someone, the king smiles and enjoys the power conferred on his son to behave with others in whatever manner his son wishes. Alas, sometimes such manners end up in the prince's hands reaching to the king's beard. Grooming and educating princes is a very tiresome job if kings really wish their princes to learn the skill of governing their states in a manner that can bring them fame instead of infamy.

The prince is more dangerous if he is adopted and raised with the motive of replacing the bonafide heirs. One such example is Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus, popularly known as Nero, of Rome.

He was the fifth Roman emperor and his obnoxious conduct and arrogant style of ruling resulted at the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. He ruled from AD 54 until his death in AD 68. He was adopted by the Roman emperor Claudius at the age of 13 and succeeded him on the throne to the exclusion of Claudius's real son, Britannicus. Nero was Claudius's stepson, being the son of a previous marriage of Claudis' wife (and Britannicus's stepmother) Agrippina. He got the throne with the support of the Praetorian Guard and the Senate.

Historians indicate that Nero was advised and guided by his mother Agrippina, his tutor Seneca (famous dramaturge, writer, and minister of Nero), and his praetorian prefect Sextus Afranius Burrus, but he soon sought to rule independently and to rid himself of restraining influences. It may be remembered that the Praetorian Prefect was a high office in the Roman Empire, originating as the commander of the Praetorian Guard (which made him the chief of the special guard force). However, he did not listen to anybody and his power

struggle with his mother was eventually resolved only when he murdered her. The information came to us through historians, poets, and dramatuges who portrayed him as tyrannical, self-indulgent, debauched, and eventually declared a public enemy by the Roman Senate. Nero was also known as a disobedient adopted son who spat on the face of his father several times but his father did not take any action and considered his act as an act of an arrogant child. We know powers always love and encourage arrogance so the father of Nero loved Nero's acts.

The historian Tacitus claims Nero was neurotic and morally corrupt while the historian Gaius Suetonius accused him of the Great Fire of Rome for clearing land for his planned "Golden House" and then he held Christians responsible for the fire and had them burned alive.

The relationship between the adopted heir and mentor usually becomes imbalanced when the adopted heir wants to grab absolute power and wants to command everybody around him. This quest for "absolute power" entangles their relations and ends only when one of them is eliminated physically, morally, or politically. The desire to subjugate everybody always produces enemies and disputes.

It is always worth reading Homer's *Iliad* when I wish to find philosophical and historical perspectives on social or political dynamics. Homer says that when a dispute arises for absolute power, usually disputing parties never listen. He cites in *Iliad* that Agamemnon who was the king of Mycenae had a dispute with Achilles, and Nestor, who was the king of Pylos, asked both (Agamemnon and Achilles) to back down. However, fueled by his intense pride, the angry Agamemnon ignored Nestor's plea, accusing Achilles of wanting to rule and lord it over everyone. Here Homer writes this:

*True, old man – all you say is fit and proper –
but this soldier wants to tower over the armies,
he wants to rule over all, to lord it over all,
give out orders to every man in sight. Well,*

there's one, I trust, who will never yield to him!

Homer says that there is always the one who never yields to anybody— He is the real King.

Time has changed and princely states are mere memories of bygone days in the Subcontinent. Today, “political power” is the state where princes rule. We can find a number of political heirs in Pakistani politics who were raised to the level of a prince and then their hands reached the beards of the kings and the majority of them ended up intimidating the state and then were consequently removed from their thrones. We have also observed that adopted princes always spit on the faces of those who produced them. Do we learn from history?

Article was published on June 20, 2022

Nourishing a viper in the bosom

Independent journalism and democracy in Pakistan have always been in survival mode because both are interlinked and both contest the writ of anti-constitutional forces.

A hybrid cadre was developed in Pakistan around 2008 to mitigate professional journalists and this hybrid cadre called itself *Sahafi* (journalist). Making a mockery of politicians and Parliament had been the core term of reference of members of this clan who neither respected Parliament nor the politicians, rather both were their prime targets. Their articles and their talk shows always ended by leaving a message that all politicians are (were) corrupt and the parliamentary system had failed to deliver

therefore a new constitution is (was) needed to replace the parliamentary system with a presidential form of government or any such political system in which the power lies with a single person instead of directly elected representatives of masses.

By abusing politicians, Parliament, and the Constitution, this cadre of vloggers, bloggers, anchors, and political analysts successfully filled television screens and prime places in Op-ed pages by 2014. They were elevated as senior experts, senior analysts, and social scientists by state institutions and state-funded think tanks.

By 2018, they had already replaced working journalists who reached television screens and Op-ed pages after going through long journeys via newspaper newsrooms, or reporting rooms. Soon this new cadre became mouthpieces of different power grids. The front rows during media briefings and dinners in the Presidency, Prime Minister House, Chief Minister Houses, and Governor Houses were filled with these hybrid journalists. Hundreds of unknown websites having no physical addresses or credible names were launched to establish this cadre as “credible writers”. Seasoned and working journalists had no option but to watch what was going on and to survive the social and economic strangulation they were victims of. Unluckily, there are no rules laid down by the state to determine who can be a journalist therefore this new cadre who had never been in journalism before landing in media outlets faced no resistance from journalist rights platforms. This new cadre is composed of doctors, engineers, showbiz celebrities, bank employees, shopkeepers, real estate developers, and retired officials of the civil-military bureaucracy. They are those who did not opt for journalism as their career like any working and professional journalist but they entered this arena in the sheer quest of enjoying the power and pleasure a manipulating and cunning media person could enjoy.

Having no ethical teaching of journalism, this cadre from the very first day was considered as dangerous and I remember one of the senior journalists while talking to me

in 2018 foresaw that the system is nurturing snakes, and sooner or later they will bite the system. I thought he was commenting so negatively because he was thrown away from mainstream journalism.

Alas, his prophecy came true within years. Now the majority of these hybrid journalists are biting the state institutions that crafted them with huge investments. Look at the social media and television screens where they were placed, you will listen to their venom-filled comments against state institutions and they are protected layer by layer so even state institutions look helpless in front of them. The system when it was launching them, could have thought that it would manage them and they would only bite others. However, history testifies that nourishing a viper in one's bosom always results in a fatal bite, nonetheless, it could be too late to regret. Unfortunately, we do not learn from history.

Lucius Seneca was a Roman Stoic philosopher, dramaturge, and one of the ministers of Nero of Rome. Seneca in his letter written to his friend Gaius Lucilius who was a Roman satirist said, "There are many whose faults go undetected only because they are weak and cannot harm much to others but when their (social, economic) strength grows, they will act no less daringly than those whose fortunes have already given them an opportunity because they lack only the resources to display the full extent of their iniquity. "

Giving an example of a viper, Seneca further writes:

"Even a poisonous snake is safe to handle in cold weather when it is sluggish. Its venom is still there, but inactive. In the same way, there are many people whose cruelty, ambition, or self-indulgence fails to match the most outrageous cases only by the grace of fortune. Just give them the power to do what they want, and you will see: that they want the same things as others do."

Historians believe that the example of a snake cited by Seneca actually comes from the story of Aesop known as a fable of "The Farmer and the Viper". The Greek historian Herodotus mentioned Aesop was a storyteller slave who

lived in Ancient Greece during the 5th century BCE. The moral of “Farmer and the Viper” is that kindness to evil will be met by betrayal. This moral is the source of the idiom “to nourish a viper in one’s bosom”. The story tells us a farmer who finds a viper freezing in the snow and he picks it up and places it within his coat in a gesture of sympathy to save the snake’s life. The viper, revived by the warmth of the farmer’s body, bites his rescuer, who dies realizing that it is his own fault.

Interestingly, this simple story had been under philosophical discussions by Stoic philosophers who formed Stoicism. Stoics were of the view that every living thing must act according to its innate qualities, and the snake has the innate quality of biting and releasing venom in someone’s body. They believed that a wise person, who adopts a philosophical attitude toward life, always knows that breaches of trust are common enough to be expected around us.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus who was a Stoic philosopher and the Roman emperor (from 161 AD to 180 AD) writes in his dialogues known as “Meditations” that it is sheer madness to expect the bad to do no wrong; for that is to wish for the impossible. But to allow that they should do wrong to others, yet demand that they should do no wrong to yourself is senseless and tyrannical. —

Beware lest you nurture a snake in your bosom, as the saying goes. Wise persons accept that the world is full of foolish and vicious people so they anticipate potential threats, and get ready in advance to deal with dangerous people.

Are we habitual in nourishing vipers? Do we have an antidote to the venom this hybrid media is injecting into our social body?

Article was published on June 27, 2022

Thoughts without content are empty

Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind —Critique of Pure Reason -Emmanuel Kant

There is still a debate going on among philosophers and analysts about what was in Emmanuel Kant's mind when he wrote, "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."

For me, Kant's lines are very important for understanding the construction of narrative and propagation. If I have an intuition that Mr. A is corrupt, I need to develop a negative conceptual schema to transform my intuition into a concept and my thought (Mr. A is corrupt) also needs content to justify otherwise it would remain an empty thought. In today's world, this content is usually provided in the form of manipulated information to writers, academicians, and journalists when a campaign is launched against an individual, a country, or an institution. The majority of writers and thinkers believe that Kant wrote the above-mentioned lines as a synopsis of his views about semantic content. Semantic content is a kind of content directly valuable in semantic terms (as having a reference, a sense, some truth values, etc.). Moreover, it is content identifiable with a certain proposition. In addition, it is a kind of content capable of having cognitive relevance. It makes a difference in the premises, or consequences, of our theoretical or practical reasoning. Our concepts and the thoughts they compose would be meaningless without perception, or "intuition," to verify them and thereby provide them with content; on the other, our perceptions would have no structure and would be of no cognitive use without concepts to direct them.

In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant says that if one leaves out the sensible determination of persistence [the schema for a substance], the substance would signify nothing more than something that can be thought of as a subject (without being a predicate of something else).

William J. Urban explains in his paper "Freedom qua Spontaneity: The Lacanian Subject in the Critique of Pure Reason" that without the schema, what is left over of the content is only "something that can be thought of as a subject (without being a predicate of something else)." This thought is meaningful, but it cannot be justifiably applied in judgment to any known, or knowable, objects, once we subtract the schemata. We need to know what is "schema" to understand this discussion before we move to Perceptual Schema. A schema is a collection of basic knowledge about a concept or entity that serves as a guide to perception, interpretation, imagination, or problem-solving. For example, the schema "dorm room" suggests that a bed and a desk are probably part of the scene but a microwave oven might or might not be because the bed and desk are considered an integral part of a bedroom but not the microwave oven. Frederic C. Bartlett explained that past experiences are stored in memory as schemas; impressions of other people are also thought to be organized in this way.

Leading the discussion to narrative building, we should know that these schemas help to construct opinions about someone or something. Negative schemas help to construct negative opinions or perceptions and triggering something from a negative schema related to "target" would help to construct negative opinions. For example, the corruption of politician A helps to construct the opinion that politician B is also corrupt. This perceptive game is linked with the Perceptual schema.

The Perceptual schema is a mental model that provides a frame for interpreting information entering the mind through the senses or for activating an expectation of how a particular perceptual scene may look.

No doubt several meaning-making and narrative-building theories of the philosophy of Communication are available that help to understand how to build a narrative or how to dismantle the narrative of others, but I still feel that the human mind is still facilitated by the Communication theory of Aristotle's "Theory of forms" of Plato and the

dialectical way of Socrates for naming things. The majority of philosophers believe that a dialogue held by Socrates with Hermogenes and written by Plato under the title of *Cratylus* around 360 B.C. ignited the thought that brought Plato's theory of forms and Aristotle's model of communication. The dialogue says that to name a thing (tagging etc) is not a sheer act of arbitration (arbitrary) but rather that a thing must have certain "qualities" to be named for what it is called. This discussion led to another discussion: why do we call a chair "a chair"? why not a table? Are we born with the thought that a chair (having four legs like any table) is a chair but not a table? Is calling a chair "a chair" an arbitrary act and does calling it again and again with the same name (rhetoric) give it the identity of being a chair and then it becomes conventional to name it "a chair"?

Plato in his theory of Forms says that there is nothing perfect and everything is a shadow or imperfection that we have in our mind as an innate idea. After thousands of years, Kant called this idea an "intuition". Therefore, we see that today's all theories of perception and semiotics are related directly or indirectly to Plato's work.

Aristotle extensively used Plato's theory in his work which ultimately led to his model of Communication built on Inductive and Deductive logic. Aristotle's Inductive and Deductive Logic ruled human thought till today with a contribution from American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (in 1865) who added the theory of "Abductive reasoning" in logic. Aristotle says that any communication can be broken into three parts: the sender, the message, and the audience. He believes that the success of Communication depends on the audience not only getting the message but interpreting the message in the way the sender has intended.

Aristotle developed a linear model of communication for oral communication known as Aristotle's Model of Communication. This is considered the first model of communication and the most widely accepted among all communication models.

Aristotle says that perception is best understood in the model of hylomorphic change. Hylomorphism is a philosophical theory developed by Aristotle, which conceives “being” (*ousia-presence*) as a compound of matter and form, and change of presence is material transformation. A raw lump of bronze is shaped into a statue. In this process, matter (raw bronze) loses one form (*morphe*) and gains a new form of a statue).

According to Aristotle’s theory of perception, we perceive an object by receiving its form (*eidos*) with our sense organs. The best example given by Aristotle to understand his theory of changing perception is “house change”. He says that a house changes from blue to white when acted upon by a painter applying paint, so “perception comes about with being changed and affected.” Aristotle treats perception as a case of interaction between two suitable agents: objects capable of acting and capacities capable of being affected.

Today’s communication experts and narrative builders are actually the painters Aristotle mentioned in his work who know what color to use to make a political party, a country or an institution a “dreadful house” or promote a person as a “corrupt man” or “savior sent by the divine powers”. We know “Hero constructing” since the Greek era has been using Aristotle’s work. Alexander of Macedonia who was actually an invader is known as a “hero” even in lands he subjugated like the Indo-Pak Subcontinent.

By using inductive logic, I can establish a politician “A” is corrupt therefore all politicians are corrupt, by taking one true proposition and then adding a false one but my syllogism will logically be true. There is a saying that truth has nothing to do with a logically true syllogism.

The philosopher is in love with truth, that is, not with the changing world of sensation, which is the object of opinion, but with the unchanging reality which is the object of knowledge—Plato

Article was published on July 4, 2022

Responsible Journalism versus Hybrid Journalism

It was July 1990 when I was invited by an official in his office for *gupshup* (chit chat) over the political scenario of the country in the backdrop of the 2 November 1989 vote of con-confidence that the then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto survived.

After discussing the “public pulse” about Benazir Bhutto, he offered me a tea break with baby-size samosas, and then he told me he would show me an important reel (VHS cassette). In this video, a young man was at a shooting range and targeting clay pots with an AK-47. I was told he was the husband of the then prime minister Benazir Bhutto (Asif Ali Zardari who served the country thereafter as President) and this video was some 10 years older and Asif Ali Zardari was getting training from enemies of Pakistan for subverting peace in the country.

When I asked my host why he was showing this 10-year-old video to me, he said that the public must know what kind of people were ruling the country. He indirectly told me that being a journalist it was my national duty to tell people about his background through my writings. When he was talking to me I had already understood that it was a “fake video” but there was no use asking questions about the credibility of this video that could have been recorded in a desert area of Sindh or on his own farmland where this young man could do his shooting practice. How could you ask a question about the credibility of a planted material from the person who is planting it on you? After a brief

further *gapshup* I came out of his office and erased the entire conversation from my perception. Time passed away and he never asked me about any article that I ever wrote. In 1994, I was invited by a friend who was a police official in Lahore while I was doing crime reporting. He told me that he wanted to arrange my meeting with a lady who had ruthlessly been gang-raped but she did not want to come out in public and media, so our meeting would be exclusive and I should raise her issue in the newspaper without naming the woman, but he told me who was alleged rapist. He named a young gangster Mr. Chaudhary who had first been a police informer and then became a threat to Lahore Police. I knew that the police were after him and that the gangster had already informed the media that he would be killed in a fake police encounter. My meeting was arranged with that lady who claimed she was ganged raped by Mr. Chaudhary. I asked her some questions and could not find a sequence in her story. She covered her face in the meeting so I did not know her real name nor could recognize her face.

When I came out of the place where my meeting was arranged, I told my police officer friend that he should produce this woman with her face covered for a press conference because I did not find her story true or even having half-truth, and told him I would not do a story. I did not ask him any questions though he wanted to get questions from me and was ready to answer with ready-made answers. He told me that publishing this story would be a service to the society and nation for exposing dreadful animals. I told him it is the duty of the police to take action against such dreadful animals if the police are honest to take action against them. Time passed and I erased that meeting from my perception.

Planting fake documents, fabricating so-called facts, and providing bogus evidence to journalists are part of the duty of those who are trained to abuse journalists for their vested interest that they usually call “national interests”, while it is the responsibility of a journalist not to become a

victim of such moves. The credibility of news cannot be one source that is already known as dubious.

When I was grooming as a Reporter, I had gone through several phases of learning. In the 90s and before that, raising a journalist was a process that went through the Reporting Room, News Room, and of a death chamber kind in the Editor's Room.

When an excited young reporter enters a reporting room with an exciting story, it is the foremost duty of the Chief Reporter or any senior reporter to guide him/her. In our time, we had to justify every word of our story through a multisource checking process. Our editors and seniors used to guide us and snub us in the process of reality-check and we were told that never ever trust anybody as a "credible source" unless his/her credibility or the credibility of the news (document/audio/video/ etc) is not confirmed from more sources.

People today are crying that democracy is threatened by Fake News, deep Fake, and Cheap Fake. I think fake news has been present from the very day the newspapers started publication in the world. The only difference is that journalists were journalists and today we mostly find "Generalists" who know everything through their "intuition". The majority of journalists are not working through credible sources, rather their desires, dreams, intuitions and official friends are their "sources".

An artful and intelligent officer used to plant one story at a time on one journalist but today I believe that one story is planted on several so-called journalists at one time and then we see the same story is run by different television channels through their "expensive anchorpersons". This is the reason that the officer and hybrid journalists (mostly now anchors) are ruthlessly exposed when five or ten anchors are reading line to line the same "credible information" sitting on different TV screens. There is a saying that "excess of everything is bad".

Since 2008, there has been a race going on among hybrid journalists as to who gets "today's credible information" first. Excited with a rating and visualizing their next family

trip abroad, some of the hybrid anchors even do not change the order of pointers they get as “credible information”. They are successful, powerful, rich, and resourceful and most of them are considered “credible journalists” that everybody wishes to have contact. Sometimes I wish to throw my 35 years of experience in journalism into a gutter and start “reading questions” instead of “asking questions” but I think I would be a failure in doing so because I am an honored student of my honest and dedicated teachers in journalism. For me and my teachers, journalism was and is a cause, a pious profession, and a hard career chosen by a brave person. Let me stay brave and challenging instead of becoming second fiddle to someone’s desires.

Article was published on July 17, 2022

A Corporate State and the Chief Executive

I live in a country where we find solutions to everything, including legal and constitutional issues by coining new terms to justify what we do. Pakistan was the first democratic country in the 21st century (or maybe in the 20th century also) that had a “Chief Executive” (CE) whose name was General Musharraf. He ran the country as the CEO running a corporate company.

Whenever we have a legal or constitutional crisis we successfully come over it by coining ultra-constitutional dictions and recently we had a “Trustee Chief Minister”- wow we have a solution to everything. Are we not exceptionally brilliant? Do we need a fluid constitution that can automatically keep changing its format according to Court verdicts, court observations as well as the orders of chief executives?

Whenever there is a political crisis we move forward with innovations and there is always a political crisis in Pakistan so we always move forward actually. Since former prime minister Imran Khan was voted out from office by the National Assembly in April, politicians are spending over 20 percent of their time in courts and almost the same percentage they spend to remind themselves that they are not thieves and they are not traitors. Can we run the country with this pace and innovations?

There are several questions in the mind of every Pakistani who follows political developments in the country that actually steer the economic scene and the majority of the public is now openly demanding all those who run the country “do whatever you wish but do it once and for all and do not use this country as an experimental laboratory”.

New dictions, new rules, and innovative explanations of the Constitution are bringing nothing, just chaos after chaos. I believe our acceptance of every ultra and an extra-constitutional decision is one of the core issues we are facing today since the 1988 Parliament accepted everything done by Martial Law Administrator Gen Ziaul Haq. The Post-Zia Parliament approved all unconstitutional decisions of Ziaul Haq and made them part of the 1973 Constitution and since then there is no full stop to this exercise. Pakistan People’s Party (PPP is now PPPP) validated the unconstitutional actions of Ziaul Haq stating that it had no other option. I understand PPP had no other option just to accept former President Ghulam Ishaq Khan who was representing the military establishment and he compelled late former Prime Minister Shaheed Benazir Bhutto to stamp amendments in the Constitution. She survived less than two years in power and was sent home when President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed her government under the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution that was validated by her. Former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif came into power and had to resign in 1993 due to his bitter relations with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, then Benazir Bhutto again came into

power and she again became a victim of 58(2B) and then again Nawaz Sharif came into power. He was again sent home but this time through a Martial Law administrator who coined a new terminology for his new position instead of using the word "Chief Martial Law Administrator", he became the Chief Executive of the country and the Supreme Court of Pakistan also approved this new portfolio for an illegitimate ruler. He formed PML(Q) which ran the country between the PML(N) and PPP rule with three different prime ministers in office- Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, Ch Shujaat Hussain, and Shaukat Aziz.

What did we learn from the above? We learn that replacing an elected prime minister does not need constitutional power, it just needs a "will to do". When there is a will, there is a way.

Pakistan's political arena is no less than a theatre or a circus where there is only one "Master Dramaturge". Since former General Musharraf was unceremoniously sent home, the political cadre is facing the wrath of those who could never allow the political cadre to remove a star-studded General and his departure became a symbol that political powers can contest the powerful establishment. Now the superclass decided to launch an anti-parliament hero and charismatic Greek prince-like hero, Imran Khan took arena who could get only one or two seats in previous general elections and emerged as the head of the third largest party in Parliament and by the 2018 general elections. First, he was given KPK for a test and then was elevated to Prime Minister and was gifted Punjab as the second province to rule.

He is the only person in Pakistan who has a certified "'*Sadiq*' and '*Ameen*' (honest and righteous)" status, announced by the Supreme Court of Pakistan; therefore, he cannot be a corrupt, traitor, thief, or liar. However, he kept losing his popularity, and old characters were still surviving in the circus world. What to do now? Like any popular theatre or circus, there was a need to terminate the performance and then come back with a "New Season".

I think this new season will surely work out for quite some time but we understand there is a dire need to change techniques altogether now because the majority of spectators is youth in Pakistan so the new season should terminate when we can have a completely new building of circus, with new rules of performance, and with a new different ambiance. What can it be? It can be “presidential theatre” which will be a completely new genre. And then we can all say Long Live Pakistan. Long Live with the Master Dramaturge.

Article was published on July 24 2022

Pakistan after a year of the fall of Kabul

August 15 is a date that would be remembered in history because, by the mid-day of this day, the Afghan National

Army (ANA) fell down like “House of Cards” and surrendered its weapons to the Afghan Taliban who ultimately entered Parliament House in Kabul and the US-sponsored President Ashraf Ghani ran away with bags of ill-gotten money to a neighboring central Asian country.

Since the USA ran away from Kabul, Afghanistan is facing disaster after disaster without receiving adequate help from neighbors or from international humanitarian bodies. Famine, hunger, unprecedented floods, earthquakes, and pandemics are unfortunate realities Afghans faced during the last year but the USA did not release over \$ nine billion to the Afghan people the USA has in its banks. We must remember that 80 percent of the Afghan economy was foreign funding and foreign donations when US-sponsored governments were operating in Afghanistan. Suddenly, this 80 percent went out of the Afghan economy, leaving almost nothing to survive economically.

Pakistan is also facing unusual circumstances since US forces ran away before terrorist outfits Pakistan defeated them by sacrificing the blood of over 80,000 citizens and over 6,000 sons in uniform, but they are compelling Pakistan again for negotiations and dialogue for granting peace to a nation of 220 million people. In past, no negotiations brought results for Pakistan and it had to purge terrorists with military might but the situation is reversing and terrorists are gaining ground in Pakistan while operating from Afghanistan.

Let’s have a review to understand the ground realities in Afghanistan one year after the Fall of Kabul. No country has recognized the Interim Afghan government so Kabul has still not connected with the global economy.

The US strategy for the Afghan war since its inception in October 2001 was under fire by military experts and the reemergence of the Taliban confirmed the US war strategy for Afghanistan was not based on reality but rather inspired by taking chances and shifting goalposts. The conflict cost over \$2.26 trillion to the US exchequer, the US military had to flee in mid-night withdrawal from Bagram Air Base and the world saw panicked US soldiers shifting

foreigners and friends out of the hell gate of Kabul. Over 57 NATO-friendly countries lost this war that is won by no one because the Afghan Taliban are facing different kinds of battles since the withdrawal of US-led forces and neighboring Pakistan is still facing the brunt of terrorism and radicalization that were sour fruits of jihadism planted in Afghanistan 40 years ago to defeat the former USSR.

Thousands of children died in the winter of 2021 due to malnutrition and health-related problems due to lack of resources and a collapsed economy which brought hunger which is the only reality in Afghanistan. Thousands of books can be written about what happened in Afghanistan since the US launched Operation Cyclone (in 1979) and Operation Enduring Freedom (2001) and the shameful withdrawal from Kabul. I covered the Afghan war as a War correspondent in 1995-97 and then in 2001-2006 and know the currents and undercurrents and can summarize that the Afghan wars did not bring anything good for Pakistan which offered its services for all US mess that is still spreading over in the region.

My background talks with former military men including those who served in Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) and Military Intelligence in the middle of the scene when the stage was set for spreading radicalization, drugs, and weapons in the region helped me to understand how Kabul fell instantly. They are of the view that the USA entered Afghanistan without a clear strategy and goals and it entered as an angry elephant and the only target was to use Pakistan to defeat Communism by injecting the concept of Jihad into the region. The withdrawal of US interests in the 1990s was due to the collapse of the USSR as the target was achieved. However, the rise of China, throbbing central Asian states, Pakistan's nuclear success, and surviving Iran were pointers that triggered the US desire to reach Kabul again. The US was waiting for an opportunity to land again in Kabul and 9/11 gave the US the opportunity for entering Kabul with the full support of international forums but having no clear military strategy for sustainable stay, therefore, it kept "shifting goalposts".

Military experts believe that once the USA entered Afghanistan, it decided to stay at any cost because that was a great opportunity to stay in a very sensitive and important region from where it could have an eye on everybody from Iran, China, and Pakistan to Central Asian countries. Though the USA could meddle with everybody while staying in Afghanistan it had no clear strategy to face the realities therefore leaving Afghanistan was the best option for the time being when military strategy faced a great failure.

Sometimes military establishments understand that they are going the wrong way but what to do is a question it takes time to understand and answer and this is what happened in Afghanistan. The USA sold its ill strategy to the western world that sitting in Afghanistan it was blocking Iranian and Chinese influence over the region, but everything went wrong and now China and Iran have already a good relationship with the Taliban and China is bailing out Afghan Taliban interim government with business and economic opportunities but without recognizing its legal status.

A number of Foreign Affairs experts and military historians believe the US from the very first day it landed in Afghanistan became a victim of slow and fast thinking while putting the risk analysis on the back burner and kept deciding in hurry to gain more.

Some foreign affairs experts call the US war strategy "gambling". They are of the view that if chance would have favored the USA, it could have achieved what it expected but as the very name gambling represents, without putting your decisions under probability scrutiny, the likelihood of odds against the desired outcome tends to be higher instead of being in favor.

We understand that decision-making having a high ratio of probabilities with a higher likelihood toward odds must not be taken by depending on mere chances. Chances of odds in favor or against have no logical framework as they are based on predictions driven by previous experiences. And the nominal data is in percentage, which is based on

speculation, on other hand, probable factors can be much more conclusive in risk analysis.

Since 1979, Pakistan has been a proactive partner of the USA and the only country that faced the brunt of this historic partnership. There is a long list of what has been confronted by Pakistan in quest of pleasing the USA but the situation is still not pleasant for Pakistan even after the US withdrawal. There was a time Pakistan used to say that the Delhi-friendly government of President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul was nurturing terrorism against Pakistan but the situation is getting worse under the Pakistan-friendly interim Afghan government in Kabul. Pakistan paid heavy costs and won the war against terrorism that was launched against Pakistan by India through previous Afghan governments

However, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) indicated a 42 percent increase in terrorist attacks in 2021 compared to 2020 and this trend is still rising Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) itself claimed 282 attacks in 2021 and said that it had killed more than 500 law enforcement personnel; it claimed an additional 42 attacks in January 2022. Under Afghan Taliban rule, Pakistan had to start negotiations with TTP on the advice of the Afghan interim government and ongoing negotiations are the first after Pakistan launched Zarb-e-Azb against the group on 15 June 2014. Reports suggest that Kabul has established bilateral relations with New Delhi which is continuously providing humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

One year after the Fall of Kabul, I can see there is no difference between Pakistan which is ruling in Kabul, as Pakistan would remain at the receiving end of whatever comes from Afghanistan. In my opinion, negotiations with TTP would ultimately enhance confidence among terrorists who were virtually destroyed by the Pakistan Army when Ashraf Ghani was in power in Kabul.

I have been writing for a long that TTP could not be formed and could not be in the swing if it did not have any support from the Afghan Taliban but the majority of thinkers had been claiming and blaming TTP as an Indian product. Yes,

it got financial as well as technical support from Indian intelligence agencies but its survival within Afghanistan was directly or indirectly linked to its cordial relations with the Afghan Taliban, and reports suggest TTP foot soldiers helped Afghan Taliban to defeat the Afghan Army.

The situation for Pakistan is not as simple as the majority of us believed and the killing of Ayman al-Zawahiri in the post area of Kabul in a US strike indicates that the Afghan Taliban are still supporting terrorist outfits directly or indirectly or they are so weak that they cannot stop or purge terrorists using Afghan soil.

Article was published on August 7, 2022

The miscarriage of Justice

Sociologists and anthropologists believe that half a century and a couple of wars are enough to convert a group of people into a nation. In the last 75 years, we have gone through the milestone of half a century as well as several

wars, at our international borders as well as inside our land. Technically, we are a Nation now.

According to the classical definition, a nation is a community of people formed on the basis of a combination of shared features such as language, history, ethnicity, culture, and territory. We have a territory but still not a language because Urdu being the National language is yet not used as the official language. We have a variety of cultures and ethnicities and as an identity, we have different dimensions.

I did research years ago by stopping people on the streets and asking a simple question "Who are you?" The biggest group was those who answer "I am a Muslim". The second biggest group was those who informed me of their ethnicity (Punjab Sindhi, Balochi, Pashtun, etc.). The smallest group answered, "I am a Pakistani". Their answers were not shocking to me because this is what we had been teaching in schools.

The majority of us still do not believe that "a nation is a group that gets its independence for a certain goal and is a fully mobilized or institutionalized group that works as a cultural-political community that has become conscious of its autonomy, unity and particular interests under the command of its Constitution". Here are two words that by design have been taken away from our thought process during our schooling; "Constitution" and "Political Community". Unfortunately, every decade, we are told a new concept of "why did we take our independence?" and the very next we follow another reason for getting independence and this mantra is an unending story. Sometimes I think we are a story of "miscarriage of justice" and facing the brunt of punishment for a crime we had never committed.

We, a 75-year-old nation, are the perfect stock for selling dreams, hopes, optimism, and confusion. I am the second generation that is buying dreams and my children are third and their children will be fourth. Nobody amongst us still knows for how long we will be compelled to sleep, and dream merchants keep vending us their stuff.

My pragmatic and confident parents endured painful migration in order to hand over an independent country to us, but they left for their eternal resting places when we had already lost former East Pakistan, and then thank God they did not see scenes in which around 5000 militants were slaughtering over 85,000 innocent Pakistanis. Thank God my parents did not see how the country was divided into “Pure and infidel” because both were departed souls by 1982.

I am the generation that faces the brunt of “*Rah Haq*” Gen Ziaul Haq patched for us and then Gen Musharraf informed us that “*Rah Haq*” was neither a *Rah* (a way forward) nor it was *Haq* (truthful discourse). He sold us “Enlightened Moderation” telling us it was a key to a moderate and successful society. We bought the stuff and moved on. After his running away from the country we were informed that neither “*Rah Haq*” nor “Enlightened Moderation” were key to modern society and we also accepted this narrative. My generation kept buying and putting narratives and dreams in draws and still this buying spree is not ending. My generation had been accepting everything it was offering and trying to move forward. In 1976 when I won a speech competition, my headmaster gifted me an Urdu translation of a famous book *100 great personalities of history*. When I won the Lahore Board speech competition in 1981, my headmaster gifted me the book *Maut ka manzar— marny ke baad kya hoga* (The scene of death and what would happen after death in the grave). In simple words, my generation already spent its life between these two books. Half of my age was spent deciding what should be the length of my Shalwaar (eastern trouser) and a half left to decide whether Denim is better stuff or wrangler.

Whatever I reported and observed in my journalistic career started in 1988, I can sum up as:

*“Eik aur dariyā kā sāmna thā ‘munīr’ mujh ko
maiñ ek dariyā ke paar utrā to maiñ ne dekhā”*

(I had to confront another river after I crossed one).

I had been a part of a complex society that had been going through almost all kinds of political and social experiments

and the “Laboratory rat” was still not allowed to come out of the laboratory.

We had gone through the political romanticism of the 1970s that was replaced by the jihadism of the 1980s, the compromised- democracy of the 1990s, the anti-Jihad narrative building of the 2000s, the physical fight against Jihadism in the 2010s, and onward experimentation of all—the rule of Pakistan Tehrik-e- Insaf (PTI).

Already under experimentation since 2006, the PTI “Masala mix” had an awesome taste. Now Pakistan was re-experiencing the political romanticism of the 1970s under the banner of *Riasate Madina* and trying to reclaim absolute independence of democracy. Trapped deep in poverty, illiteracy, and uncertainty, the emerging Pakistani youth was looking at its political leadership like a starving thirsty dying person in the middle of the desert and looking at the sky for divine help. That was the scene where Imran Khan put in his bid and built his narrative of hope beyond realities and promises having no fulfilments, but through his power as a dream merchant, he successfully sold dreams for a better new Pakistan among the masses.

Breaking my clichés that now people are only interested in bread and butter and better infrastructure, instead, Imran Khan woven hopes and dreams. He was selling dreams and hopes that were beyond execution and impractical. He has never contested this issue and nobody ever talked about how his promises were unachievable, impractical, and in contradiction to social, economic, and geographical realities. How could we achieve *Riasat e Madina* which is not even being promised by Islamic states of the Arab world? *Riasat e Madina* was the reality of a particular era and geographical location. We need to browse, find and contest every dream and phrase Imran is selling successfully. I do not know what would be the product, however, I am certain that all generations under Independent Pakistan are victims of a miscarriage of justice; I don’t use “justice” in the narrow sense of “legal justice”, but use this term for political, moral, social, legal, economic and historical justice. We are prisoners living in a

laboratory among different kinds of colorful chemicals and we do not know what would be the next experiment but we are sure there will be one soon.

Article was published on August 14, 2022

Floods are the “Beginning of Rebirth”

In August 2022, Pakistan faced massive floods. This was not the first time that flood waters were playing havoc with Pakistan and of course, it would not be the last time. Living without any planning and facing the worst kind of impact of climate change, Pakistan always welcomes natural disasters and is always prepared to host calamities.

Almost 30 years ago when I came back after attending the Earth Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, I wrote a series of articles in which I shared what international experts warned humanity about environmental changes and forthcoming global warming.

The Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit cautioned all nations that floods would be one of the reasons for the mass killing and mass displacement of humans. I shared my viewpoint about cataclysms we could face in the future and they were of the view that such predictions were nothing new and were part of a greater “international conspiracy” against religions and developing countries. Even they claimed such summits are sponsored by the capitalist world to inject fear among poor countries. Since then, time and events have testified that neither the idea of natural calamities brought by environmental changes was an international conspiracy nor was it anti-religion thought.

In May 2011, I presented my paper at the International Institute for Peace Through Tourism (IIPT) conference held in Lusaka, Zambia under the title of “Meeting the Challenges of Climate Change to Tourism”. I raised the issue that mass tourism had been playing havoc with environments, predominantly in former NWFP (now KPK)

where massive structural mass (constructions) had been built inside rivers by re-molding the width of rivers.

Blocking natural courses of water in the Swat River, Kabul River, Kunhar River and thousands of Nullahs (mountain torrents) resulted in an aggravated situation during the massive floods of 2010 because the natural course of water was choked by heavy illegal constructions under heavy rains and then water wiped out these structures (constructions) and brought them down the hills and destroyed every bridge that came in front of its hydro-force.

Since then, four massive floods in Swat had wiped out illegal constructions in Kalam, Bahrain, Midyan, and Mingora bazaars but massive illegal structures always came back after floods receded. I believe that there is virtually nobody in KPK that can ensure the implementation of environmental laws and the situation has become quite dangerous in the last 10 years of the PTI government in KPK because the majority of KPK parliamentarians belong to the hotel and tourism business and encroaching river land is not a big issue for them.

We still remember that the 2010 floods damaged civic structures estimated at \$4 billion, and wheat crop damages were estimated to be over \$500 million. The total economic impact on Pakistan was estimated at over \$43 billion while the original figures were much higher than the estimated figures. Corresponding reports that appeared in 2012-13 indicated a total impact on the Pakistani economy was over \$60 billion.

For long, encroaching rivers, nullahs, and water channels have become a norm in Pakistan and one can see this practice even in the capital territory of Pakistan where Korang Nullah and Soan River (also known as the Swan river) have been eaten up by posh and powerful housing societies, and even areas in the foothills of Murree has been converted into housing schemes and farmhouses and construction of their road network have filled the natural courses of water in the area.

One can remember the E-11/2 urban floods of 2021 but no action was taken against encroachers who remolded nullahs and no demolition was done to clear the area from the unnatural remolding of water channels. Interestingly, the Punjab government had planned a new city by remodeling River Ravi to mint money and land has already been given to the private sector to play havoc with the natural course of River Ravi. Some of my friends living in Karachi claim that over 30 percent of Karachi spread after 1985 by encroaching sea paths, creeks, rivers, and nullahs. I have every reason to believe we as a nation give a damn to every law, including the law of nature, and we do not wish to learn any lesson from history. Human history tells thousands of stories of the “Wrath of Nature” when humans did not stop manipulating Nature more than it could bear.

Almost all religions connect massive floods that human history faced with the “curse of divine power” to punish mankind for its wrongdoings. We remember the prophet Noah and the Great Flood. Noah’s mission was to warn his people, who were plunged into depravity and sin. As a prophet of God, he preached the Message of Allah with zeal but his people refused to leave their bad habits and then they faced the Great Flood.

Greek mythology explains floods in a very fascinating way and links floods with the idea of the “beginning of rebirth” indicating that floods come to destroy nations that are no more acceptable by Nature.

Greek mythology interprets floods as the cleansing of earth from enemies of Mother Nature and says that great floods are usually sent by a deity or deities for destroying civilization, often in an act of divine retribution. Greek philosophers, while explaining such myths, said that flood waters are described as a measure of the cleansing of humanity, in preparation for rebirth. The Greek god of water is Deucalion who was assigned to keep clean the earth. No doubt there are 3000 river gods, in Greek mythology and they are known as “Potamoi” but the most popular Potamoi was the Achelous who was chief among

his 3,000 brothers. Achelous was also responsible to maintain balance on earth, a balance that can comfort Nature.

We should remember that myths are crafted through experiences and then get the blending of storytelling therefore, one should learn also from myths and mythological characters.

Do we remember the Global Climate Risk Index placed Pakistan in the fifth spot on the list of countries most vulnerable to climate change in its annual report for the year 2020? According to the report, Pakistan witnessed 152 extreme weather events from 1999 to 2018.

The living situation in Pakistan is aggravating day by day due to massive growth in population, squeezing of forest and wildlife reserves, changing weather patterns, and lack of storage of drinking water. How long would we survive in depleting environments? is a question I am asking myself without finding a reasonable answer.

Article was published on August 28, 2022

Legitimate Monopoly of Physical Power

I am carrying the burden of “courage to know” for the last 40 years and have paid a heavy cost for this conviction. My memory lane passed through the Oval, the Logia, and the cool corridors of the old building, and ends at room number 34 where I had my first class in Government College (GC) Lahore which was a lecture on English and my first teacher in government college was Karimuddin Sheikh. He was the man who injected the college motto of “Courage to Know” into me led me to explore whatever I did not know and this probe is still continued. Knowing that awareness is a curse and ignorance is a blessing, the quest for knowledge does not stop once someone tastes its pleasure.

The courage to know helps us to accept the reality that there are situations we cannot change but also provides us the courage to change the things we can change and the

wisdom to know the difference between what we can change and what we cannot.

My career in journalism started before I left Government College in 1989. Having a degree in political philosophy, the first decade in journalism I tried to understand the philosophy of politics in Pakistan, and the next decade I spent accepting the acrimonious authenticity I found in the quest for the courage to know what drives politicians to join politics; bureaucrats to join the bureaucracy; an army official officer to opt for the duty to protect the motherland, a police officer to choose uniform and a judicial official to join the judiciary.

Whenever you meet anybody who serves the power delegated by the State, he or she will usually tell you that he or she joined the power grid of the State in a quest to serve the country. Fewer of them will accept that power is all the more cunning because its primary forms can change in response to our efforts to free ourselves from its grip and the effort to free ourselves from its grip lures us to get more power.

Lord Acton, a British historian of the late 19th century said that power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely. In the last four decades, I attended countless weddings of children of politicians, bureaucrats, army Generals, and judges that made them *Samdhis* (relatives of the child's spouse) of each other. According to my understanding, they moved forward to consolidate already attained power. When we study the "philosophy of power" as a student, we are taught that the philosophy of power is based on the recognition of the dominance of law and uniformity in society. However, things are otherwise in reality because we see powerful individuals and groups denying the dominance of law and uniformity in society. To understand the philosophical aspects of power, we should study the diversity of philosophical thoughts on power. From Plato's Philosopher King to Thomas Hobbes's State Power, even philosophers believe that power has the essences of sovereignty, unified control, and monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force.

French philosopher Paul-Michel Foucault while explaining Thomas Hobbes's State Power dynamics says that the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical power is a real force of violence in the world, and not only state violence but corporate violence due to enormous condensations of capital. In Pakistan, the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical power is being shared with groups and even individuals by the State.

The State provides legitimacy to powerful groups and individuals to exhibit and use physical power and the simplest example is the private security and guard system allowed by the State to gated housing societies and to powerful individuals roaming on road with their security guards while exhibiting the latest weapons and harassing common people. In the process of delegating "legitimate monopoly of physical power" to individuals and powerful groups, the State itself is becoming weaker day by day, though the State itself is run by these powerful groups and individuals directly or indirectly. One can say there is a fallacy of thought in this statement but actually, there is not if we keep the connotation and denotation of the definition of the "State" in our minds.

There are two most popular definitions of the State (though there are hundreds of definitions for the modern state). The first definition says that a state is a centralized political organization that imposes and enforces rules over a population within a territory. The second most popular is that a "State" is a polity that maintains a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Now we understand that the State is a faceless entity while individuals and groups have names and faces but they maintain a monopoly on power and they have been legitimized by the State to use this power.

Pakistan's social system supports individuals to get hold over the two major and foremost institutions of the State—*Thana* (Police Station) and *Kutchery* (courts of law) and pressure groups have become so strong that they want to dictate courts for giving decisions of their choice and that we have seen in the Imran Khan Contempt of Court Case.

Today's State of Pakistan is not faceless— it has faces like Mr. A, Mr. B, Group A, and Group B.

Moreover, the discrepancies among the population, the strength of law enforcement agencies, and the strength of the judiciary are unbelievable. No State can ensure its writ over 222 million people with only 936,000 serving Armed Forces and 397,364 policemen. On the other hand, the unofficial/unconfirmed strength of private security guards provided by registered security agencies is over 3.2 million and if we add the strength of unregistered and personal security guards then the figure can jump to 4 million. Figures indicate that individuals and groups are stronger than the State if we talk about security issues.

The judicial system in Pakistan has an exceptionally low strength as the Supreme Court of Pakistan has 17 judges, Lahore High Court has 50, Sindh High Court has 25, Peshawar High Court has 15 and Baluchistan High Court has 6. Districts & Sessions Judges/Senior Civil Judges & Civil Judges are 649 in Punjab, 390 in Sindh, 177 in KPK, and 125 in Baluchistan.

The private sector (Individuals and groups) has already taken over the control of other services usually linked with the responsibility of the State like the Health sector, Education sector, housing sector, and transport sector.

I fear any group or individual can come forward and say that there is no State of Pakistan and I am afraid that institutions of the State would not have an appropriate response to contest this claim.

The book "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators" written by Robert Irwin Rotberg indicates that states fail because of many reasons including internal violence, failure in delivering positive political goods to their inhabitants, and losing their legitimacy as an umbrella of protecting the population from social, economic, legal and physical exploitation of powerful individuals or groups. Are we moving ahead to this situation or have we already reached there?

Article was published on September 5, 2022

Laws are enacted for the poor

“Laws are enacted for the poor and weak while the rich and resourceful enact them”

The above-mentioned lines are from a poet whose name is lost under the dust. Some dramaturges who used these lines in their plays believe this stanza was written around 524 AD when young Justinian (who is also known as Justinian the Great) desired to marry a dancer and actress namely Theodora. At that time, Roman law barred anyone of senatorial rank from marrying actresses or those who had been known as prostitutes. In 524, the uncle of Justinian the Byzantine Emperor Justin passed a new law to fulfill the desire of his nephew to marry Theodora and new orders stated that reformed actresses/prostitutes could thereafter legally marry outside their rank if approved by the emperor. The same law stated that the daughters of

these actresses would also be free to marry a man of any rank. Soon after Justin's law was passed, Justinian married Theodora.

We may remember he was the same Justinian I who imposed a ban on theatre and plays before he fell in love with theatre actress Theodora. According to the book *"An introduction to European Theatre-History of Performing Arts from the Greek period to the 20th century"*, the Byzantine Empire was strongly influenced by Church and theater faced problems around the middle of the fourth century AD when the Archbishop of Constantinople, John I Chrysostom became a prominent critic of theatre, attributing theatre as a source of spreading immorality. According to the Church circles, songs, music, and theatrical happenings aroused lust and posed dangers to peaceful family life.

The fight between the Church and the Theatre was intense and the hostile attitude and approach of the Church towards the Theatre virtually halted the progress and the evolution of the Theatre under the Byzantine Empire. The Church considered the stage as a tool of moral corruption, while acting was considered sinful because the Church believed that imitation of life was a mockery of God's creation. This harsh criticism continued throughout the Middle Ages and eventually, the theatres were closed permanently by Emperor Justinian I. He considered theatre actors sinful and were denied owning slaves, wearing gold, and even could be not allowed to have any social contact with Christian women. Even their basic religious rights like attending religious services, marriage, and burial were also denied. In simple words, they were officially excommunicated and defamed throughout Europe.

However, everything changed when Emperor Justinian I married actress Theodora and on the desire of his Queen Theodora, Justinian I allowed the theatre to work, and the ban was lifted. The change of rules for providing a way for Justinian I to marry Theodora and then the lifting of a ban over the theatre on the desire of Theodora could be reasons for an unknown poet to say that *"Laws are*

enacted for poor and weak while rich and resourceful enact them". Theodora had great influence over Christianity and the Byzantine Empire as Queen and she ordered the rebuilding of Constantinople (today's Istanbul) after it was almost burnt down during the Nika revolt. Theodora ordered 25 churches built. The most famous church built by her is Hagia Sophia (Now known as Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque).

Over 1500 years have passed but the connotation, denotation, and credibility of those poetic lines— "*Laws are enacted for poor and weak while rich and resourceful enact them*" still justifies their content.

Since then the world had gone through several administrative and political experimentations and had moved from Empires to several kinds of democracy, but laws are always enacted for the poor by the rich and powerful. The 21st century started with purging civil liberty and the right to privacy in the USA after 9/11 and the State was allowed to know everything one could consider "private". What you are writing? to whom you are writing? who is visiting your home, and who is sending money to you? to whom you are sending money and why? with whom do you have contact, and where do you go and why? with whom you spent the last night? where did you spend last night? are examples of infringements on the right to privacy. "Homeland Security" in the USA was introduced in the name of purging terrorism. Several new dictions were introduced including collateral damage, embedding journalism, the right to attack a sovereign country before it could attack the interests of the USA, and state censorship becoming a part of life.

All the above-mentioned new dictions were imposed all over the world for combatting terrorism. One can argue all actions mentioned above were essential and needed to protect humanity from terrorism. Let me accept this argument because the well-being of humanity is a fundamental issue in the Western world.

We were told that humanity is in danger due to climate change and global warming and one of the most lethal

factors of climate change is carbon emission and the usage of coal is the biggest source of carbon emission. This is true scientifically. We must avoid using fossil sources for producing energy to avoid the already existing danger faced by our earth. Since the Rio de Janeiro moot took place in 1992, the West has been monitoring developing countries and discouraging the usage of coal and other fossil fuels. Europe even decided to stop producing vehicles that use fossil fuels and new assembly plants for producing motorized vehicles (electric vehicles) are encouraged all over Europe.

We know strict rules were enacted to discourage every activity that can generate carbon emissions in Europe and European airports do not even allow jets to use conventional fuel. As we know rules are only for the weak and poor so the case is today after the Ukraine-Russia war. One decision of Europe to sanction Russia after the Ukraine-Russian war has compelled European industry to find alternative energy due to the shortage of oil and gas supply from Russia and the immediate answer is coal—the father of carbon emission.

Heavy buying of coal by European industries has increased its global prices and even created a shortage in the global market. European countries are justifying the use of coal because humanity is at stake in the Ukraine-Russian war and climate change or global warming is not an immediate priority of Europe. Europe has “reason to believe” that Russia would stop the war in Ukraine by facing strict sanctions and European industrialists have “reason to believe” that usage of coal in their industries would not generate carbon emissions at high levels therefore Europe has reason to change laws to protect humanity that is under attack by Russia. We must remember: *“Laws are enacted for poor and weak while rich and resourceful enact them”*

Article was published on September 11, 2022

Asad Munir, Maryam Nawaz and the NAB

Maryam Nawaz was very fortunate that she had seen her acquittal in a case that National Accountability Bureau (NAB) fabricated against her. Retired Brigadier Asad Munir, was not so fortunate and his daughter had to wait till his third death anniversary to read the news of the acquittal of her late innocent father who committed suicide after being cruelly persecuted by NAB. He was a simple soul having a small family and a soft heart so he could not survive the character assassination that followed his arrest in a case where powerful and artful got pre-arrest bails and lived

normal lives and placed all allegations on the shoulders of Asad Munir.

A promising military official who also served as sector commander in the prime intelligence agency in Peshawar took his life on March 16, 2019, and left a letter pleading his innocence. On March 22, 2022, he was found “not guilty” by the court that observed the case against Asad Munir was fabricated and baseless.

People who knew Asad Munir personally say that dejected by humiliation for a crime he never committed, Asad Munir psychologically died several times before his physical death. They believe he did every time when he had to parade handcuffed before the media, where once again he would be subjected to intense media trial by media trained in abusing everybody whosoever was facing “fair play and justice” under the desires of the then Prime Minister Imran Khan who was doing a “Jihad” against *choor* and corrupt.

On March 14, 2019, Asad Munir wrote a letter to the then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan Justice Asif Khoosa pleading his innocence stating that he (Asad Munir) was being driven to take his own life. He only asked the CJP to see that no one else is meted out of the humiliation that he was made to undergo. Driven by despair and anger at being gravely insulted, the very next morning, he hung himself.

In the same month when NAB clamped Asad Munir in a fabricated case, (December 2018), a former chief executive officer (CEO) of the University of Sargodha’s Lahore campus Prof Mian Javed Ahmed, who was in Camp Jail in connection with a NAB inquiry, died in prison reportedly of cardiac arrest. According to jail authorities, he had a heart attack and was moved to the hospital while doctors at Services Hospital Lahore confirmed that Mian Javed was “received dead” by doctors. The family of the deceased held NAB and jail authorities responsible for his death stating that the health condition of Mian Javed Ahmed was not well and he could not survive the humiliation he had been facing from the media and the NAB authorities.

When an objectionable video of Chairman NAB Javed Iqbal was leaked by a woman name Tayyaba, I thought that nature had taken its justice and now Chairman NAB but I was mistaken and he completed his tenure even after two years of video leaks and no action has taken against him so far.

It may be remembered that Tayyaba had lodged a complaint with Pakistan Citizen Portal (PCP) alleging that the then chairman NAB was harassing her and her family because she refused to please him. She claimed that she had recorded several videos and audio recordings against him. No action was taken against Chairman NAB, no inquiry was conducted and nothing has happened in this case though Chairman NAB is retired from his post. In June 2022, Tayyaba appeared before the Public Accounts Committee of the parliament where she submitted alleged audio and videos. Chairman NAB may or may not be involved in harassing Tayyaba but only an impartial inquiry can decide the facts and truth.

The working of NAB had been criticized even by courts and several laws of NAB was changed to curtail the highhandedness of NAB but no political party shows willingness and moral strength to disband an institution that had reportedly been used for political engineering since its inception. This institution was allegedly responsible for arms twisting of politicians, harassing bureaucrats and civil officers, and thousands of people who had been victims whose lives were ruined for years, and then courts acquitted them because they were found innocent. However, no action has ever been taken against NAB officials for fabricating cases against innocent people. "You are guilty unless you prove that you are not" is the most ruthless proposition that was the base of the NAB ordinance.

After the acquittal of Maryam Nawaz PTI narrative builders are of the view that her acquittal is politically motivated forgetting that PTI had been in power from 2018 to 2022 but NAB prosecutors failed to produce any tangible and credible proof against her for any wrongdoing in Avenfield

Apartments purchase etc. She was jailed and harassed and her media trial on a high pace continues even today.

In Pakistan justice is mostly delayed therefore is mostly denied and you can find thousands of articles criticizing the judicial system of Pakistan. There are thousands of recommendations stored in iron cabinets of the Ministry of Law for reformation of the judicial system and almost every government (civil and military, martial laws) promised Judicial Reforms nothing has been done so far and we are using century-old the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPc) introduced by British Raj 1898. Yes, we had cosmetic changes but are afraid of the drastic changes it requires to ensure justice for the weak and poor in our society. I am not discussing here the lacunas and ills of the judicial system and what reforms are needed to ensure justice for the common man of the country. I am just discussing NAB which is based on a new kind of incorrect principle of “burden of proof” in which the accused has to prove that the accused is not guilty. In the classical (normal) judicial system the burden of proving the guilt of the defendant lies on the prosecution, who must prove the particulars of the offense beyond reasonable doubt but NAB laws are otherwise. According to my understanding, the NAB laws are influenced by the early stage of the Roman justice system that was founded in 753 BC. Roman Law went through many stages. The first stage was based on the principle of “personality”. This stage is called *jus civile* (civil law) where the law of the state applied only to its citizens and foreigners had no rights unless protected by some treaty between their state and Rome. Foreigners could be seized like ownerless pieces of property by any Roman. In NAB laws every common Pakistani is a “foreigner” of Roman Law and citizens are only those who are powerful and who operate the system. By the middle of the 3rd century BCE another type of law, *jus gentium* (law of nations), was developed by the Romans to be applied both to themselves and to foreigners for granting legal cover to foreigners. I hope that our stage of *jus gentium* will come before the end of the 21st century.

Article was published on October 2 2022

Political accident does not occur abruptly

Last week I saw one of my friends who is a senior journalist commenting on a television show that former Prime Minister Imran Khan had crossed all limits of political decency. My friend was of the view that nobody in the history of Pakistan had ever abused, taunted, and challenged the Pakistan Army in such a derogatory way as Imran Khan had been doing so. He expressed his shock that such behavior of Imran Khan had yet not faced the

consequences that several politicians in Pakistan had to face in past without doing anything wrong. He claimed Imran Khan was instigating the public to stand against Pakistan Army. Yes, intimidating the public against Pakistan Army is unprecedented in Pakistan. My friend believes that Imran Khan is the greatest political accident in our history. After listening to his television talk, I texted him one *shar* (verse) written in the 50s by Qabil Ajmari that answers today's situation in two-folds. Qabil writes:

Vaqt kartā hai parvarish barsoñ

Hādīsa ek dam nahīñ hotā

(Time nurtures accident for years therefore accident does not occur abruptly).

His response to my text message was a crying face emoticon. I am of the view that if Imran Khan is the greatest accident in political history then we should remember he had been nurtured for years—at least since 2007. If his talks against Pakistan Army are the greatest accident, then we should recollect the long history of political meddling of adventurists since the 1950s. Do we not recall the 1960s elections of Fatima Jinnah, the 1970s hanging of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the 1980s party-less elections, the 1990s formation of IJI and 2000s Moderate Enlightenment, the 2010s Naya Pakistan project, and many more incidents I must refrain from mentioning here?

The majority of my readers may not know who Qabil Ajmari was although a line of his poetry "*Hādīsa ek dam nahīñ hotā*" is very popular among writers and journalists. Born on August 27, 1931, in Churli, Ajmer Sharif, Abdul Rahim popularly known as Qabil Ajmari was a character of Roman tragedy who died in 1961 after living a very short life of 31 years. Qabil lost his father when he was seven years of age and his mother died within two months after the death of his father. Their deaths were followed by the deaths of his brother and sister and he was all alone in the world when he was just 20 years of age. All accidents in his life were caused by tuberculosis which was an incurable disease at that time. Qabil was also exposed to tuberculosis and had

been fighting against death while writing awesome poetry. In 1960, he was admitted to Railway Sanatorium Quetta for treatment where he met a Christian nurse Susan who knew that Qabil could not survive tuberculosis but fell in love with Qabil Ajmari and decided to marry him. They were married and had. Qabil Ajmari died on the first birthday of his son on October 3, 1962. Susan who embraced Islam before her marriage died in 2001 and their son Zafar Qabil is an activist who lives in Sakhur.

Qabil's opinion that accidents do not occur abruptly and time nurtures them actually a simple explanation of the "Theory of Cause-Effect Inference" which describes that at least two causes are needed for an effect to take place and then effect changes into cause for the corresponding effect. This process is also known as "Causality" and "Causation" in political philosophy. We find the best explanation of "Causation" in Aristotelian philosophy. He says that "cause" is an "explanation" or "answer to a "why" question. He says everything happens due to a cause. Further explanation of this theory indicates that there must be more than one cause for any effect. There is no doubt that Aristotle's explanation is lengthy and somehow difficult to explain. He categorizes the four types of causes include material, formal, efficient, and final. Since we cannot find always a logical linkage between cause and effect and one cause can correspond to different effects in different circumstances therefore philosophy places the issue of cause and effect in the domain of "metaphysics" instead of "logic". One must not forget that the entire Causation Chain (conversion of effect into the cause of the corresponding effect) has the same essence. Therefore, if the first cause is based on "bad", the entire chain shall never bring "good". Therefore, in metaphysics (for example in mysticism), we believe one should do a good deed that will bring another good and this chain will continue.

Since the "Rise of Khan", the military establishment had been facing criticism for allegedly creating a hybrid creature as well as a hybrid system. While giving the

example of “The Frankenstein monster”, the majority of us believes hybrid creatures only bring “bad”. However, I wish to refer to one character from Greek mythology that was the offspring of the mythological couple Typhon and Echidna and he was considered a “good creature”. The couple in quest of saving goats from lions created a hybrid “Chimera” and this fire-breathing hybrid monster was composed of a lion, with the head of a goat and a tail that might end with a snake's head. Since the idea behind creating this monster was “good” for saving goats from lions, therefore Chimera is known for bringing good to society. I must not say Imran Khan is a hybrid creature but I have no reason not to believe there was an experiment for installing a hybrid political system. Should we not ask did this experiment bring good or bad?

The political stage Pakistan is going through is an outstanding sample that one cause can correspond to different effects in different circumstances. Political engineering and creating heroes had been successful and terminating projects had been easy in past but this time it is affecting the entire fabric of society and there are fears in the minds of people like me that it will disastrous when this effect will work as a “cause” for the corresponding effect.

Article was published on October 10, 2022

Abrogation of the existing social contract

The former COAS Gen Qamar Bajwa on October 8, 2022, while addressing cadets at Kakul Academy directed men in uniform to respect the democratic institutions and be always ready to defend the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and Constitution of Pakistan with their lives.

This statement from the then chief of the Army was very encouraging because Army had a long history of abrogating the Constitution of Pakistan and then standing behind those who nullified the Constitution. One can remember the incident punishment announced by the court to former Army Chief Gen Musharraf for abrogating the Constitution of Pakistan and the swift and strong reaction that came from the Pakistan Army against the verdict on December 19, 2019, when the then Director General Inter Service Public Relations of Pakistan Army said that the military had expressed its reservations after Musharraf was sentenced to death by a special court for high treason and the decision given by special court had been received with a lot of pain and anguish by rank and file of Pakistan Armed Forces. He was of the view the Pakistan Army is (was) not just an institution. It is (was) a family. "We know how to defend the country and also know very well how to defend the respect and dignity of the institution. But for us, the country comes first and the institution second", he added.

I remember former COAS Gen Musharraf used to call the Constitution of Pakistan "just a piece of paper". I also remember that the abrogation of the 1973 Constitution by Gen Ziaul Haq therefore I consider the statement of COAS Qamar Bajwa as an excellent beginning of a new military-parliamentary relationship and I hope cadets who would be officers soon would esteem in the future what their chief had directed them.

We cannot live in past and we have to move forward that is why I consider that civil and military relationships need a

“New Social Contract” and massive amendments are needed in the Constitution of Pakistan and the the Establishment Code.

The abrogation of the 1973 Constitution is an act of “High Treason” and the punishment can be a death sentence. Is it not a very harsh punishment? Is it a healthy approach to protect someone even if he abrogates the Constitution of Pakistan? After every martial law, the courts tailored justifications for acts of abrogation of the Constitution. Was it not a partnership in the crime? Why under civilian as well as under military rules the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer and the country slowly but surely heading towards economic collapse? Is it not a pertinent question that also needs an answer? Greed for power is playing havoc with the country almost in all sections of the administrative structure and even a peon behaves like “British Gora” when a poor and powerless person asks him to allow to meet “Sahib” sitting in an office.

After serving 35 years in journalism I have a firm belief that the entire (social, administrative, moral, and economic) structure of the country is crumbling and nothing good can be contracted out of this redundant system. The public blames politicians for the collective disaster and politicians blame the Army for all ills and Army after every abrogation of the Constitution of Pakistan said that the state was in danger and all civil institutions were corrupt and non-operational so it came to rescue the country from collapse. Can we survive with such a long thread of blame games? In today’s Pakistan, the punishment of the powerful is not possible and every powerful institution jumps on the way of execution of punishment (if ever announced) to protect its member. People like me criticize the “Abrogation of the Constitution” but usually keep silent over the “Abrogation of the entire social System”.

As I mentioned above, we cannot live with a constantly failing system and we have to establish a “New Social Contract”. The Social Contract theory tells us persons’ moral and/or political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement among them to form the society in

which they live. We need to decide once and for all that do we need a religion-based Social Contract or should we continue with a western-based Social contract since we cannot live for long with a hybrid Social Contract because Social Contract is the foundation of “Reward and Punishment” in any society and the slow death of our society is due to abuse of “Reward and Punishment” within the system.

From morning to evening, we see that the corrupt are rewarded and the honest are facing the brunt of the corruption. The first idea of Social Contract we find in Political Philosophy came from Socrates. The dialogue between Socrates and his wealthy friend Crito of Alopecis is written by the Greek philosopher Plato who was a student of Socrates. In this dialogue, Crito wants to bail out Socrates from the death penalty he was facing and Crito also offered Socrates to arrange his escape from Athens to avoid his death but Socrates tells him why his (Socrates) death by drinking poison is important for society and why he must remain in prison and accept the death penalty. This dialogue tells us about justice, injustice, and the appropriate response to injustice.

In this dialogue, Socrates believes injustice may not be answered with injustice, personifies the Laws of Athens to prove this, and refuses Crito's offer to finance his escape from prison. Socrates tells us that society cannot live without unconditional obedience to the law of society even if laws are unjust. If they are unjust, they must be amended but the obedience to laws must be unconditional till they are ruling society. This dialogue is considered the core of the Social Contract Theory that the majority of governments follow today.

Unfortunately to say that in societies like Pakistan, laws are obeyed only by the poor and powerless while the rich and powerful give a damn about them. Although I am a strong supporter of the Parliamentary system I have to accept Parliament has failed to amend laws that are redundant and support only the powerful like the Criminal Procedure Code while the judiciary looks helpless to follow written

laws and finds the “Law of Necessity” to bail out powerful and the State machinery –the Administration looks totally failed in ensuring the implementation of the laws.

Economically vulnerable, depending mostly on the real estate industry that is eating out agricultural lands, unproportionate population growth, depleting natural resources like gas, facing the brunt of climate change and natural disaster, foreign-sponsored terrorism, having redundant administrative system, ever-increasing corruption are huge challenges Pakistan is facing and expending civil-military relation faultline can be more disastrous than we can imagine today. The only way out is a New Social Contract approved by all stakeholders including the common man who is the real victim of whatever the system is bringing to him.

Article was published on October 16 2022

Nothing for you to fear, no punishment to come

There is a saying that Hybrid creatures eat their creators once they have grown teeth. Chairman Pakistan Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan started his "*Haqeeqi Azadi* March" (Real Independence March) after an unprecedented press conference held by two Lt Generals who guaranteed the nation that the military was no more involved in politics and Army as an institution had decided it would not meddle into politics. Khan's idea of Haqeeqi Azadi was of course independence of the public and the politicians from the Army who according to Imran Khan had been interfering in politics since the independence of Pakistan. Of course, his Haqeeqi Azadi was not from politicians in power because they according to Khan's narrative are as powerless as Imran Khan claimed he had been when he was Prime Minister of Pakistan. When former Director General of Public Relations (ISPR) Lt Gen Babar Iftikhar was asked to comment about the alleged involvement of the Pakistan Army in the exceptional political rise of Imran Khan, he and his fellow Lt General and chief of ISI avoided answering and said some other days this point could be discussed at length.

There is no need to get involved how did Imran Khan manage 175 plus National Assembly seats in 2018 though his tally was just 30 plus in 2013 this was the greatest figure PTI ever had in National Assembly since it was launched as a political party. Hybrid politicians and a hybrid system like the party-less parliament of 1985 and the formation of kings parties had always been a part of Pakistani politics. Now political scientists in uniforms say that they have closed down political laboratories and I think we must believe them because we do not have any other option than not believing them. By trusting they have

closed down the political laboratory, we can discuss what would be next. From Karachi-based ethnic party to the Taliban, the Pakistani establishment has successfully managed with Frankenstein monsters but this was the first time that a hybrid creature had compelled two prime wings of the Pakistan Army to hold a joint press conference where two three-star generals had been explaining the situation they had been facing while alleged hybrid creature kicked off his *Haqueeqi* March after this unprecedented press conference. This indicated that Imran Khan was all ready for a head-on collision with a state institution that allegedly nurtured him for years. Two DGs at the press conference also said that former Prime Minister Imran Khan had been offering a “Life-Long extension” to Chief of Army Gen Qamar Bajwa. This point reminds me of a scene from the early 90s. I remember in March/ April 1993, the then President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and the then Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif were on the warpath. To ward off the threat of 58 (2) (b), Nawaz Sharif offered his support to Ghulam Ishaq Khan if the latter wished to be re-elected. Ghulam Ishaq Khan decided to dismiss the government lest he was seen to be bargaining for the office. In case, Imran Khan too similarly baited Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa to wriggle out of the no-confidence motion, it was very likely to backfire. In fact, if another extension was tabled as the two DGs stated in the famous presser, it would be worse than horse trading for which our politicians had often been accused. I consider Imran Khan’s proposal was just a perversion of an institution and the then COAS Gen Qamar Bajwa took bold steps by not only rejecting it but also deciding on his retirement after one extension he was already completing now. In this press conference, DG ISPR and the head of the supreme intelligence agency confirmed that the late anchorperson Arshad Sharif had always been in their contact as he was the brother of a martyred military officer and a son of a Ghazi as his father was a retired officer of Pakistan Navy. Arshad Sharif who ran shows “How did US change regimes all over the world” and “*Vo Koon Tha?*” (who was he?) was

a polite and well-educated anchorperson who had a remarkable professional rise till his unfortunate death he had been holding shows to expose alleged corruption of all political parties except PTI. He had access to material against PMLN, PPP, JUI, and other anti-PTI parties. Unfortunately to say that he had to run away from the country when the KPK government informed him that his life was under threat and that TTP had planned his killing. Former Prime Minister Imran Khan had said several times that he advised Arshad Sharif to leave the country. Former Federal Minister of PTI Shirin Mazari claimed that head money was announced for killing Arshad Sharif and he was advised by her party to leave the country. During their press conference, DG ISPR said that an investigation team had been formed to probe why did Arshad go to Kenya, who advised him to go there, with whom he had been living, and who had been looking after his stay in Kenya? DG said that we all must wait for the findings of the investigations team.

The DG ISPR maintained that Arshad Sharif was a very capable and hardworking journalist, adding that he had no life threats in Pakistan. Major General Babar Iftikhar said that as per their information, a threat alert was issued by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government but no details were shared as to where the provincial government received the threat. He said that the KPK government extended full-proof security to Arshad Sharif and also facilitated his exit from the country.

He said that an impartial and transparent investigation must be carried out to ascertain the facts which led to the killing of Arshad Sharif. He said that the CEO of ARY Digital Network Salman Iqbal must also be included in the investigation. As a former Crime Reporter, I believe that one should not comment on the death of Arshad Sharif because his dead body had two autopsies—one in Kenya and a second in Islamabad and autopsy reports would determine in what circumstance he had been shot dead and we all should wait till investigation report is with us.

In homicide crime, the foremost point is who is the beneficiary of any killing and in this case, I believe beneficiaries are those who want to create doubts against the military Establishment and the sitting government of Pakistan because the late anchorperson had been critical about Military Establishment and PMLN-led multiparty government.

In his case, one can write a list of beneficiaries that also include foreign powers who always want to harm the Pakistan Army, and Indian intelligence agencies RAW can be one of them. Possible beneficiaries also include owners of his former television channel who had been using Arshad against PMLN, PPP, and the Pakistan Army. Possible beneficiaries also include those who advised him to leave the country for creating a scene in the Military Establishment wanting to harm Arshad Sharif.

Unfortunately to say that fears expressed by former PTI federal minister and leader Faisal Vawda in a hurriedly called press conference were not “so unfounded” that the dirty, brutal, and ruthless game had entered into a deadly phase where spreading blood corpses in streets was very much likely. His press conference cost him the termination of his basic membership with PTI. I appreciate Faisal that he had exposed many who were allegedly planning dirty scenes to ham this country that is always going through economic disasters.

*Nothing for you to fear, no punishment to come. Oh I'd pay
you back*

if I only had the power at my command!"

*No more words—he dashed toward the city, heart racing
for some great exploit, rushing on*

*like a champion stallion drawing a chariot full tilt, sweeping
across the plain in easy, tearing strides—Homer--The Iliad*

Article was published on October 30 2022

What a man dares to do, he should dare to confess

In my letter titled *“Haqeeqi March: Nothing for you to fear, no punishment to come”* I expressed my worries that *the dirty, brutal, and ruthless game has entered into a deadly phase where spreading corpses in the streets is very much likely*. Alas, the dead body of innocent Muazam Ali lying in Wazirabad bazaar complained me why was he a victim of this game of corpses. I have no answer to respond to him. Alas, I could have been brave enough to find one and share with his three under-aged sons covering his blood-socked body.

The alleged assassination attack on former Prime Minister Imran Khan in Wazirabad was followed by his “Address to the Nation” which was followed by a statement from Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) of the Pakistan Army. Imran Khan in his address blamed Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan, one serving Maj General (name withheld for national cause because we must not name our sons in uniforms serving sensitive intelligence agencies), and Prime Minister Mian Shabaz Sharif planned his assassination. Imran Khan claimed that he was in contact with “insiders”. A number of journalists like me had been thinking that Imran Khan must have support or contact with insiders but we were afraid to write about this though Imran Khan himself now has indicated this.

The ISPR statement said that the baseless and irresponsible allegations by Chairman PTI (Imran Khan) against the institution and particularly a senior army officer are absolutely unacceptable and uncalled for. The statement claimed that no one will be allowed to defame the institution (Army) or its soldiers with impunity. Imran Khan had never and would never ask permission from Army before defaming it. He had been allowed in past to abuse anybody he wished to. Since he was voted out in April 2022 from PM Office, he had been slurring against Pakistan Army and its head but no action whatsoever has ever been taken against him. I believe that Imran Khan has a long history of abusing all state institutions but in past, his targets were Parliament, Constitution, and Democracy and now he had changed the “butts” while the firing range and the rifle are the same. Who would confiscate this rifle provided to him in past? is the question that needs an answer. He had been behaving larger than the state, above any institution and he was portrayed as the sole honest and truthful person in Pakistan while everybody that questions him is a liar, infidel, and traitor. Just six months ago, questioning his conduct was a “state crime” so it will take time to change the psychological state of his followers as there is no “off and on” switch in the human mind. Whatever happened in Peshawar where PTI followers jumped on a tank installed as a symbol of the armed power of the Pakistan Army near Corp Commander House and were kicking Commander’s Hatch was one of the most painful scenes a defence correspondent like me could have watched in videos appearing on the screens of Indian television channels.

When Imran Khan was coining dictions like “neutral”, and “Janwar” (animals), a number of independent sane writers and political analysts were foreseeing that soon or later, the direct target of Imran Khan would be the institution of the Army because a number of former federal ministers of his cabinet were slowly but surely initiating that military is a privileged class, they live in separate colonies, they take special treatment in hospitals, they run separate

educational institutions on the cost of public exchequer while a common Pakistani has no access to such social and administrative systems. This discourse had been established to create hatred among the masses against Pakistan Army and to expending the fault line between the Civil and military relationship. Unfortunately to say the majority sitting in cozy offices could be of the view "let him do it he shall be handled as many had been in past". Now we see that the enemies of Pakistan are already using Khan's discourse.

An article I read titled "*The Court of Public Opinion and Loaded Statements of Imran Khan*" indicated that Imran Khan is (was) delivering a massive number of speeches containing objectionable discourse which in the actual legal system has no place but in the court of public opinion, he is not only rejecting all norms of authenticity and sincerity but by repeating these figurative linguistics he is altering the mind of youth that the most vulnerable to unauthentic catchy phrases miles away from reasoning, and evaluation. The writer indicated that theatrical performances (Imran's public meetings) have all the sources of meaning-making, all forms of communication, communication with music, communication with exaggerated moments, communication with different intonations and a narrative structure having empathy, misery, valor, grandeur, and mischief. I believe the writer was absolutely right and the results now we see from the Peshawar incident can spread everywhere in the country.

Whatever has happened, it has happened and there is no reverse gear in history so the question is what to do now? I am not pessimist person nor I am pragmatic because I am a follower of a realistic approach in life. Things are not as simple as we consider sitting in our offices and things are not as bad as PTI is portraying. There is still hope that damage can be mitigated though it has already been done. However, the mechanism of mitigation is tiresome, treacherous, and has a high-risk factor. It is like defusing a live bomb and mine sweeping in marshland. Moreover, the process has no shortcuts and no firefighting techniques.

The youth (from age 14 to 45) has been the main target group of PTI as it was demanded to disgruntle youth against politicians, parliament, the constitution, and democracy so the mitigating process must target this age group.

I teach in universities so I know that both the academicians and students were deliberately prepared to follow “project Imran Khan” which is why the state has to work on both components of our educational system. Our youth must be taught how propaganda tools had polluted their innocent minds. Rehabilitation from the consequences of social drug that was injected among youth to get the result of hating opponents, dividing society, encouraging intolerance, and abusing everybody that can question Imran Khan is needed. To save the country from further social and economic disasters, we need to cease everything that can allow further divisions in our society. Nothing is impossible if there is a will to rectify what has gone out of control. We all need the courage to accept the truth and we all need to admit we are no angels. Rafael Sabatini in his novel “Scaramouche” published in 1921 said that what a man dares to do, he should dare to confess unless he is a coward.

*I hate that man like the very Gates of Death
who says one thing but hides another in his heart. -*

Homer

Article was published on November 6 2022

Political theatre and the poetry of resistance

The French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (26 July 1940 – 23 August 2021) says that “poetry makes the difficult, the absolutely difficult—Easy”. This is the reason poetry had been used since ancient’s times as a successful resistance tool.

Emmanuel Folorunso Taiwo the author of “Poetics of Resistance in Roman Antiquity” believes that voices of dissent, whether verbal or written, have the historical backgrounds of being symptomatic of governments characterized by oppressive policies and brutal force. He writes that in both ancient and contemporary times, resistance poetry assumed different meanings in different creative contexts and academic disciplines.

In ancient times, poetry was considered “so dangerous” which is why it had no place in the ideal state of Plato who barred poets and comedians from being part of the city-state. History testifies that comedy and poetry had been two metaphysical brutal swords to fight against ruthless regimes. In “Republic” Plato condemns the poets and exiles them from his idyllic city. The Republic is perhaps

one of the greatest literary works of all time and a poem in its own right though written in prose. For Plato, everything is dangerous that has the potential to challenge the writ of the State therefore comedians and poets must be thrown away from the city (State).

A *nazm* (poem) written by Ahmed Faraz in 1982 when he was living abroad has become very popular in social media among followers of Imran Khan nowadays. Faraz's poems and writings harshly disapproved military regimes of Gen Ayub Khan, Gen Ziaul Haq, and Gen Musharraf. His work cost him arrest, financial strangulation, and social purge while other poets standing on the other side of the divide like Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi and Perveen Shakar had been enjoying their exceptional rise under the patronage of the State. When Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ahmed Faraz, Famida Riaz, and Habib Jalib were writing against military dictatorship, Perveen Shakar was writing rejoinders to their anti-establishment poetry.

In response to the poetry of Ahmad Faraz and Famida Riaz that they were producing against Martial Law dictator Ziaul Haq while living abroad, Perveen Shakar who was the "literary face" of state-run PTV and state-run Radio was writing rejoinders like:

Tohmat laga ke maa pe, jo dushman se daad le..

Aise sukhan farosh ko mar jaana chahiye..

(Those orators who take appreciation from enemies by abusing their mother must die)

Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ahmed Faraz, Famida Riaz, and many more had to leave the country to avoid the wrath of Ziaul Haq while Habib Jalib and many others had to stay in the country and kept battling the subjugation of Ziaul Haq who during his speech at the National Writers' conference on November 25, 1980, said that everybody from businessmen to teacher and from a professor to a writer must have to do their work within the parameters and guidelines of the religious values and nothing else would be accepted and allowed. Whosoever wanted to retain his position in society like Ashfaq Ahmed, Bano Qudsia, Jamil Jalibi, and many better understood the message of Gen

Ziaul Haq and had no problem during and even after Zia's regime while those who were deaf, had no reasonable place in society during his one-decade long regime.

If Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi can be considered the poet of the State, then we can call Ahmed Faraz a poet of Resistance. Qasmi had always been awarded by Martial Law rulers. He had been conferred with a Pride of Performance Award by the President of Pakistan Gen Ayub Khan in 1968, the *Sitara-i-Imtiaz* (Star of Excellence) Award by the President of Pakistan Gen Ziaul Haq in 1980 and he enjoyed a lifelong government job in *Majlis Taraqqi-e-Adab* (July 1974-2006).

The post-independence resistance poetry in Pakistan was mostly written against the Martial Laws of Gen Ayub Khan, Gen Ziaul Haq, and Gen Musharraf. Some poems of Habib Jalib written under Ayub's Martial Law once again became popular during Ziaul Haq Martial Law and even during Gen Musharraf's hybrid rule because their connotations and denotations represented the same subjugation that had been faced by the public under military dictators before Gen. Musharraf.

I believe Musharraf's Martial Law was the first practical test of a hybrid system when he coined the term "Chief Executive of Pakistan" instead of Military dictator or military ruler or Martial Law Administrator. Technically speaking, it was the first time Pakistan had officially proclaimed a corporate entity headed by a Chief Executive in uniform, and this experiment went on from the day Musharraf clamped Martial Law on October 12, 1999, till 2002. Have you ever read that a country is run by a "Chief Executive"? Yes, we know almost all private corporate sector entities have Chief Executives while countries are run by presidents, prime ministers, kings, queens, or military dictators. By the time of Musharraf, resistance poetry was no more in the mainstream. Nevertheless, it never died and resistance poetry had been popular and had been produced in smaller cities and towns of Southern Punjab, as well as in Baluchistan. By 2007, Musharraf was losing grounds for several international reasons. He was no

more the only option for the US-led war on terror that had a changed face by 2007. A resistance movement against Musharraf started at the beginning of the year 2007 and on October 2, 2007, Musharraf had to resign from Pakistan Army although he should have retired in 2002 or maximum in 2003 if he was not the one who had the power to decide who could stay in Army and who could not?

The resistance movement against Musharraf resulted in the rise of the importance of resistance poetry and several poems were produced during the movement of lawyers against Musharraf. However, such poetry that was created for a specific movement or circumstance did not survive and died out when the movement died out, and on August 7, 2008, President Musharraf was no more in power. Now almost after 14 years, the alleged political role of the military is again under question and this time it is PTI that is targeting the military for its suspected intervention in politics and Haqeeqi Azadi March is against the military establishment of Pakistan led by former Prime Minister Imran Khan who himself was apparently a product and project of the military.

Pro-military writers always provide a point against politicians stating that almost all politicians rose to power through the military and were raised in the lap of the military dictators and then they became critical to the military establishment. My understanding is that there had been no place in Pakistan where politicians could rise because there had always been the military rule and intelligent politicians made their way under the patronage of the then dictators. When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came back to Pakistan for serving his country, there was the military rule of Gen Ayub Khan so he had to join the band if he wanted to place himself in Pakistani politics. He revolted against the military the moment he got the opportunity and formed his political party. Mian Nawaz Sharif decided in the early 80s to rise as a politician and that was the time of Martial Law of Gen Ziaul Haq so he had to go through the corridors manned by the military ruler. Imran Khan decided to enter into politics in 1996 when there was no

military rule but he had to join the band soon by supporting the Referendum of Gen Musharraf in 2002. So this is not the sin of politicians of rising under military rulers rather there had never been a free political arena available in Pakistan where there were no Martial Laws from the early 50s till the end of the 20th century.

I compare the political scene of Pakistan to a theatre. So-called democracy had been arriving on the power stage as a comedian performance or a chorus that arrives between the two main performances (acts) or at the time when there is a need to change the backdrop of the stage according to the demand of the forthcoming new scene. Let me add here that the poetry of resistance had always been a part of theatrical performances, mostly it was performed at the end of the main scene of political theatre. Will this theatre go on as before? I wait for an honest answer.

Article was published on November 13, 2022

Foreign Affairs and politicians

Politicians are politicians and they live, rise, and fall through their political moves. They come into power for a certain period through elections in a democratic system, they rule their term and they pass on the government to other political parties or other politicians if they fail in elections. Therefore, political governments are not permanent governments. Almost every country has a political as well as a permanent government and this permanent government is its civil and military bureaucracy.

Imran Khan's cipher fiasco exposed again that our permanent government is also crumbling as our political system is. We have listened to an audio leak about what

role Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Azam Khan played in this tragicomedy theatre. He is a part of the permanent government and he is one of the custodians of the state. The weak character of former Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood is also questionable because the Foreign Office from March 2022 till the end of the PTI government refrained from giving a straightforward answer about the nature of the whole issue. Whenever media persons asked questions about the reality of cipher, the Foreign Office (FO) never gave a clear-cut answer when Imran Khan was in power and FO always responded with ambiguity that supported Khan's version.

Both are bureaucrats of Grade 22, the highest attainable rank for a Civil Servant in Pakistan. We have seen pathetic and immature performances come from both top bureaucrats when they failed to stand for the State and bowed down against a reckless and ill-behaved political government.

This was not the only instance where the Foreign Office failed to perform an expected professional role that was needed during 42 months of the rule of PTI. Imran Khan and his team magnificently created difficulties for our ambassadors serving abroad, particularly in countries where Pakistan has high economic and diplomatic stakes. Without any reference, connotation, or denotation, former foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi once passed derogatory remarks against Saudi Arabia, and then he had to withdraw his words. On August 2020, Qureshi said that he would be left with no choice but to advise his prime minister (Imran Khan) to call a session of all those Islamic countries that are ready to stand with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, "with or without" the Saudis. He was also criticized by Saudi social media for his impolite posture in a meeting with KSA Ambassador in Islamabad when Qureshi's shoe pointed at the Saudi envoy. Diplomatic circles claimed that the then Ambassador of Pakistan in Riyadh Raja Ali Ejaz requested his Minister to review his candid behavior while meeting with royal dignitaries, Minister took serious note of it and was replaced with Lt.

Gen (retd) Bilal Akbar. Raja Ali Ejaz was posted as Ambassador in Riyadh in January 2019 and was replaced in January 2021. Diplomatic circles indicate that Lt. Gen (retd) Bilal Akbar also expressed his point of view that Pakistan must be careful and must give due respect and honor to Saudis while dealing with them. He was also replaced within the next 10 months and then Qurashi placed his most trustworthy officer as the new Ambassador in Riyadh in November 2021. In two years, Pakistan changed three Ambassadors in Riyadh. It is believed in diplomatic circles that if a country keeps changing its Ambassador in a host country, actually it wants to send a message to the host country that the station (country) is problematic.

We remember former Minister for Human Rights Shirin Mazari wrote a Twitter message against the French President and it bounced back within hours and the French Embassy in Pakistan strongly reacted. We also remember the Turkish solid waste management firm was unceremoniously thrown away. We also recall that the Chinese-led Orange Train project of Lahore was halted for long period and PTI had been trying to find corruption in the project. I recollect former Railway Minister Sheikh Rasheed accused of large-scale corruption involved in the ML-1 project that PMLN signed with the Chinese government. He ordered an investigation but nothing came out of this probe. However, Chinese firms took back seats and waited for normalcy in Pakistan so the ML-1 project was halted.

Statements of former Federal Minister for Communication Murad Saeed against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project claiming large-scale corruption involved in the CPEC project had also been a problem for the Chinese because such statements had been used in official reports the United States prepared against the CPEC project.

In November 2019, Ambassador Alice Wells, the then Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia at the U.S. Department of State raised several critical questions about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during her talks at Woodrow Wilson Center

citing several statements of Pakistani politicians and the then serving ministers (of PTI government). The then Ambassador of China to Pakistan Yao Jing repulsed the narrative of Ambassador Alice Wells about CPEC and said that the China-Pakistan relationship is (was) mutually beneficial and based on “win-win cooperation” for both sides. The Chinese Ambassador stated that CPEC projects were investigated and it was unanimously concluded that there was no corruption in their affairs.

In March 2022, the then prime minister Imran Khan condemned European Union (EU) for asking Islamabad to condemn Russia over the Ukraine-Russia war. While addressing a public meeting in Vihari, he lambasted EU ambassadors for writing a letter to the Foreign Office of Pakistan urging Pakistan to vote against Russia in a special UN General Assembly session on the Ukraine war.

This was the first instance Imran Khan abused foreign countries (except India) in political/public meetings for gaining domestic popularity. Then there was no end to this practice. The cipher fiasco was the pinnacle of the diplomatic shows PTI had in public meetings. When he was using cipher for all his political purposes, the White House kept rejecting claims of Imran Khan regarding Washington’s role in an alleged “foreign conspiracy” to oust him from power.

Khan was voted out in April 2022 but he started claiming in March 2022 that “an international conspiracy against was part of regime change funded by western countries”.

In his March 27 public meeting, he claimed he was punished for not supporting Ukraine’s cause and visiting Moscow when President Putin initiated the bombing of Ukraine.

From March 27 to November 15, 2022, Imran Khan took several positions and took several U-turns over domestic issues he blames and claims against establishments kept changing but he kept saying that he is the victim of US conspiracy. He had been establishing that the United States ruined Pakistan and it was also involved in the judicial murder of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Now he has taken a remarkable U-turn. In his latest interview published in Financial Times, Imran said that he no longer “blamed” the US and wants a “dignified” relationship if re-elected.

“As far as I’m concerned it’s over, it’s behind me. Pakistan and I (Imran) want to lead good relationships with everyone, especially the United States” said Imran Khan.

In an interview, he also admitted his visit to Moscow a day before the Russia-Ukraine war started in February — for which he claims the US retaliated against him — was “embarrassing” but said the trip was organized months in advance.

What Imran Khan and his cabinet members had been saying against foreign countries could be the political demand of PTI for domestic gains. They are politicians and they have their own interests, therefore, I would not blame them for what damage they have done to the foreign relations of Pakistan by antagonizing friendly and important countries. However, I am amazed at what a puny role professional diplomats sitting in the foreign office of Pakistan played during the whole fiasco spreading over 42 months. Could they not stop the reckless PTI when its politicians were damaging foreign relations with Pakistan? Is pleasing politicians for better foreign postings more important than safeguarding state interest through showing professional displeasure against the thoughtless actions of politicians?

When you talk with someone in the Foreign Service cadre, the answer is simple Foreign Service cadre has limited choices and chances of postings and they have to entertain politicians for lucrative postings so they keep pleasing their political bosses. Their answer is not so unfounded because we have seen large-scale foreign postings during the PTI era mostly done through the procedure of pick and choose instead of appreciating professional credentials.

The PTI epoch gives a lesson to learn that there must be a strong and independent Secretary in office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; as strong as in the Ministry of Defence. Foreign Office is as important as the Ministry of Defence if

we talk about the interests of the country and there should be a minimum role of politicians in transfers and posting as we see in the ministry of Defence.

Article was published on November 20, 2022

Political engineering and politicians

Without going into details about the role of the military in politics, I appreciate retired COAS Gen Qamar Bajwa who in his last speech as Chief of the Pakistan Army reaffirmed that the military as an institution had decided last year that it would not meddle with politics. If I am not wrong, I heard such statements several times since the beginning of the 21st century when “project Imran” was launched. Anyhow one should be pragmatic and trust what Gen Qamar Bajwa had said he practically kept the military out of politics in the last several months although Imran Khan had been crying for help from Rawalpindi and had been abusing military leadership when he felt he was betrayed. After the appointment of new COAS Gen Asim Munir, Imran Khan again demanded that the military should play its role in early elections.

I am of the view that neither military can keep itself away from politics for a long time nor politicians can change their habit to seek support from GHQ so we need to design a working model in which military and civil leadership can have candid debates not only about political upheavals or economic health also to decide strategic and defence challenges faced by the motherland. There should be no sentiment of “trespassing” if civilian leadership is advising something to military leadership on important and sensitive issues and vice versa. I hope both parties would come out of “presentations” mode soon and would enter into “discussion” mode. The last 70 years are full of military interference in politics but we all know that has not produced any tangible good for the military and almost every experiment succumbed to self-inflicted injuries but the home-grown political cadre survived against all engineering.

Syed Ali Raza also known as *Manzar Bhopali* has rightfully written:

Umar bhar to koi bi jung lar nahi sakta

Tum bhi toot jaoge, tajurba hamara hai

(Nobody can fight the war their whole life and fatigue is the ultimate end of such behavior)

The hatred for democracy, parliament, the 1973 Constitution, and politicians brought hybrid systems but every arrangement had an age of less than one decade. However, after the failure of the previous arrangement, there was always a new experiment to get “desirous results”. Nevertheless, history books are silent about what kind of desirous results the military wanted to achieve.

I believe the tenures of Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Ziaul Haq, Musharaf, and Imran Khan who had a civilian face brought nothing to the military but a debauched reputation and caused further extension in the civil-military divide. In the Russian language, there is a word “*Zachem*”. Its literary meanings in English are “What for?” but Russians use it for an aimless and useless action. I believe that system should now come out of this *Zachem* phase and everybody must work together to take the country out of the

economic, administrative, political, and moral collapse Pakistan is facing today because we have reached a point where our permanent state is also crumbling and that is a very dangerous reality. Civil Establishment Code popularly known as ESTACODE is practically becoming non-operational as officers of federal services posted in the provinces of Punjab and KPK are refusing to report back to Establishment Division when they are called back. We have listened to an audio leak of what a role an officer of grade-22 of the Pakistan Administrative Service, (previously known as the District Management Group or DMG) played in the cipher fiasco and now he has reportedly left the country because he does not want to report to the State to answer several questions about the alleged role he played for creating a political situation out of a classified document.

We had seen how a woman named Farah Gogi allegedly took state property worth billions of rupees from Toshakhana and allegedly sold it in Dubai. Of course, she could not do it until and unless Cabinet Division helped her in this illegal act and handed over the state property to her. Cabinet Division is run by a Secretary belonging to the Pakistan Administrative Service who is an employee of the Federal government—the State—but he stood with the alleged culprits Cabinet Division refused to provide the record when journalist Rana Ibrar Khalid demanded the record by using Right to Information. Cabinet Division in Islamabad High Court took a position that information related to Toshakhana was “Classified” and could not be shared publically. I have seen that Cabinet Division kept quiet when Toshakhana was allegedly controlled by people like Farah Gogi who could take anything out of the Toshakhana building. I can cite several other examples here indicating that top bureaucrats had apparently decided to forget their duties and responsibilities towards State and they stood with a non-permanent state--- the Political Government for enjoying their lucrative postings and this trend is seeping down to the district administration level.

We had seen how the KPK government helped former PM Imran Khan on May 25, 2022, to attack the capital of Islamabad. The Chief Secretary and the IG Police were officers of the federal government but they allegedly provided safe passage for Khan to enter Islamabad with the KPK police force and administrative machinery. We understand that two federating units (the province of KPK and Punjab) were standing against the federation and bureaucrats posted in these provinces are showing extraordinary political tilt towards provincial governments run by PTI. My question to state institutions is, can we run the State of Pakistan with such arrangements for a longer period?

We know that the concept of the modern state is derived from Greek and Roman philosophies of "Perception of State" which is based on the principle of "Subordination to the common good".

In ancient Greeks, there was no sharp distinction between political rulers and bureaucratic officials as both were considered the "position holder of constitutional authority" and obedience to the "Constitution" was a must for both of them. The disobedience of the "Constitution" could cost the life of any "position holder of constitutional authority". This background of political philosophy behind the State helps us to understand that disobedience towards "subordination to the common good" is an unforgivable crime and this subordination is the base of the State.

I have been writing that year 2022 was a historic year that brought unusual circumstances for Pakistan and we should learn from what had been happening to the Constitution in reference to disbanding of the Assembly by the PTI Speaker, trolling to state institutions, abuse of bureaucratic positions in reference to cipher fiasco and Toshakhana case, abuse of Presidential office reference to Punjab cabinet oath taking crisis and flouting of state writ by PTI at several occasions. I believe that we have to review the Constitution, the powers conferred to the President and to the Speaker National Assembly besides the ESTACODE that always helps the bureaucrats whenever they are found

guilty of subverting or disobeying the State. A complete overhauling of the system is needed otherwise we cannot avert another “project Imran” despite promises and commitments coming from everywhere. Politicians after every political debacle claimed they were victims of an “error of judgment” but I believe every time we had turbulence, we had a “tragedy of error”.

Article was published on November 27, 2022

Challenging supremacy of Superclass in Pakistan

Politicians in Pakistan are portrayed as incompetent, corrupt, useless, and illiterate who have no skills and expertise to run the country. The 1973 Constitution is considered as trash and a piece of paper that can anytime throw into a dustbin. This is the perception that has been crafted with tireless efforts since the orphaned parliamentary system was launched in Pakistan. I joined active journalism in 1987 when *Amir al-Mu'minin Ziaul Haq* was running the Emirate of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan according to himself had already destroyed the Pakistan

people's Party (PPP) whose founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had already hanged to death in Rawalpindi jail. Last week I attended a cake-cutting event for the 55th Anniversary of PPP where loud slogans of "*Jeeay Bhutto*" and *Kal bi Bhutto Zind tha ---Aaj bi Bhutto Zinda Hai* could be heard. Thousands of followers of Bhutto visit every year his grave where he was buried at midnight in 1979 by men in uniform under strict security and nobody within his family was allowed to see his face. I witnessed the arrival of his daughter, Benazir Bhutto, in Lahore on April 10, 1985, when almost over a million followers welcomed her at the old Airport of Lahore and the tale of her procession was at Government College Lahore intersection and this 11 km journey she finished in 14 hours. I reported her rise as Prime Minister twice, I reported the aftermath of her assassination in Liaquat Bagh Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007 (aged 54), and I also reported coming back of PPP again in power without her. PPP faced the brunt of two army dictators for over 45 years but still has government in the province of Sindh.

Party-less general elections of Ziaul Haq gave birth to a new cadre of politicians and one of them is Mian Nawaz Sharif. I reported his rise with the help of Gen Hameed Gull and Gen Ziaul Haq and I also reported his arrest by the Chief Executive of Pakistan Gen Musharraf and termination of government twice. He rose again as Prime Minister and then he became a victim of "project Imran Khan" but I again reported coming back of his party into power this April. He was compelled to leave his country by Musharraf with a commitment that he would not come back for the next 10 years. Mian Nawaz Sharif faced the brunt of many military generals but he kept surviving in politics and neither iron-fisted Musharraf nor *Shukria Raheel Sharif* could abolish his political career. Even Bajwa Doctrine got failed and the so-called illiterate, corrupt, and incompetent politician reclaimed his place within the system. The lesson learned is armless politicians proved themselves stronger than the Establishment of Pakistan which had "laser focus" projects against politicians. Political engineers

in uniform tried their best to ruin the careers of politicians but politicians always found some ways to defeat engineers in uniforms.

Now we have come to know that the military has decided to stay away from politics. I receive this news with certain reservations and will keep my finger crossed. It is very difficult to hand over Empire so easily to someone you consider incompetent, useless, corrupt, and illiterate. I believe that this decision of staying away from political power can be a tactical retreat but not a firm decision. I fear that thousands of political cronies, hundreds of powerful families, and dozens of living legends from ex-servicemen cadre would continue to advise and beg military leadership to stay in the political arena because this is their biggest source of honor, bread, and butter. Anyhow it is too early to say anything that what role the military will opt for under unusual circumstances it is going through.

A country that is facing implosion due to unskilled youth, depleting natural resources, economic and natural disasters, incompetent and politically motivated bureaucracy, and greedy politicians is difficult to pull out from possible economic and administrative collapse. Cosmetic performance would not help now and neither military nor civilian leadership can work in the moral vacuum that has been created by the PTI cadre. Mutual respect among social groups eroded by “project Imran” must be reclaimed as soon as possible if we really want to avert social collapse. For this purpose, offering economic, social, and moral accountability by powerful groups is strongly needed. We must accept that the mantra of “accountability of politicians” has now surpassed our youth and is demanding accountability of everybody regardless of social status and the notion of the sacred cow has been rejected by a new generation.

A number of anthropologists believe that cultures reboot every 70 years. Although there is no firm and tested theory in favor of this notion we have seen in history that culture reboot is not so unfounded. Now Pakistani society has

completed this 70-year phase after independence and we have already celebrated the 75th Independence Day. Supporters of this “70-year reboot” there is a revolution of some sort going through silently in every society. The founding and second generation generally lived through the experience that shaped them which led them to create a cultural system to respond to that situation.

Since that experience was real for the first two generations, they can pass those ideas to the third. However, the great-grandchildren of the founding generation are skeptical of this system, question and challenge it, and seek to reboot it for the new conditions they face. This reboot phase is usually turbulent, and dangerous but natural.

The level of turbulence is directly related to levels of economic and environmental degradation, demographic imbalance, and imbalance in the distribution of resources among groups. Unfortunately to say all these factors are much higher than normal in Pakistan so turbulence during a “70-year reboot” would be greater and quite unpleasant. Nobody can predict the future with full confidence but we can make general cultural predictions by looking at general circumstances and what cultures do. This doesn’t mean that we can make specific predictions about the future but rather that general social trends can point us to things that we can expect in the future.

Honestly speaking, we do not find any nation that has not gone through this societal collapse at least once in its lifetime. Anthropologists say that a collapsed society may revert to a more primitive state, be absorbed into a stronger community, or completely disappear. They also believe that societal collapse is generally quick but rarely abrupt.

The major factors of collapse reported by anthropologists, historians, and sociologists are environmental change, depletion of resources, loss of cultural identity, the downfall of the government, rise of violence, unsustainable complexity, invasion, disease, decay of social cohesion, rising inequality, intolerance, a decline of cognitive

abilities, loss of creativity, and misfortune. Here I leave it to my readers to make a list of how many of the above-mentioned factors we can find today in Pakistani society.
Article was published on December 4, 2023

“Made-in-Pakistan Jihad” and the TTP

What happened in Bannu CTD Center on December 18, 2022, reaffirmed the skills and weaponry power of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) that kept engaging Pakistani security forces for over 48 hours fighting inside the building. This incident reminds us of what happened in

GHQ Rawalpindi on 10-11 October 2009. Operation *Janbaz* cleared the building but left a sense that nothing is secure in Pakistan. Since then Pakistan Army had been trying to establish a sense of security among citizens and TTP has been engaging Pakistan in an unending fight that is still going on.

Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* and Operation *Raddul Fasad* tried to defeat terrorism but it has never been defeated and the multi-headed serpent of terrorism is still alive. I fear that it will remain alive till Pakistan will keep engaging itself in Afghan issues and keep feeding Afghans.

I served in Afghanistan as a journalist during 1995-97 and then covered the so-called war on terror from 2001-2006. This field assignment helped me to understand the currents and undercurrents of the Afghan war and the Afghan mindset. I believe TTP could not be formed and could not be in the swing if it did not have support from the Afghan Taliban but the majority of writers had been claiming and blaming TTP as just an Indian product. Yes, it got financial as well as technical support from Indian intelligence agencies but its survival within Afghanistan was within the active support and cordial relations with the Afghan Taliban. TTP foot soldiers had been helping the Afghan Taliban to defeat the Afghan Army in past.

Afghan problem is exceptionally complex; multiple dimensions since 1979 and had been compromising the security of Pakistan. Some people claim the Afghan war is a big business for many in Pakistan and they cite allegations of selling stinger missiles and the *Ojari* Camp blast of April 1988, known involvement of powerful groups in the drug and weapon business, benefits of Afghan Transit Trade and Commissionerate of Afghan Refugees for those who had always been in power in Pakistan. These above-mentioned factors since 1979 are diamond mines by those who understand why Afghanistan is important for Pakistan.

The killing of Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul in a US strike was enough to know that Afghan Taliban are still supporting terrorist outfits directly or indirectly or they are so weak

that they cannot stop or purge terrorists using Afghan soil. We know TTP leadership including Mullah Fazulhullah had been living in Kunar province of Afghanistan with the perceivable support of Afghan Taliban even before they captured Kabul. Everybody knows that Mullah Fazlullah was one of the biggest enemies of the Pakistan Army in the region but he had been living a comfortable life in the Kunar province of Afghanistan and had been using Afghanistan as a launching pad for attacking Pakistan.

There is no doubt and we are circumstantial evidence that the Indian intelligence agency RAW invested in forming TTP that had safe havens under Afghan Taliban-controlled areas. This situation could be considered as a linkage between Afghan Taliban and Indian networking but it had never come under discussion in Pakistan.

In one of my articles that appeared in Pakistan Today titled "A year after the fall of Kabul" published on August 7, 2022, I categorically mentioned that the TTP problem had not been solved and negotiations with TTP would ultimately enhance the confidence of terrorists who were virtually destroyed by the Pakistan Army when Ashraf Ghani was in power in Kabul. Afghan Taliban are cutting iron hedge Pakistan installed during Ashraf Ghani's tenure at the Pak-Afghan border and it was intact till the Afghan Taliban did not come into power. I believe soon we will find parts of this iron hedge in some iron melting plants in Pakistan.

Do we remember that today's Afghan Taliban are second and third generations of "Mujahedeen" who were crafted to destroy the regular army of Soviet Afghanistan? Mujahedeen smashed the Afghan government under "Operation Cyclone" and their second and third generations won the war against US-led 55-plus countries.

The United States launched Afghan Jihad in the late 70s against the former Soviet Union. This Jihad having the code name of "Operation Cyclone" was directly or indirectly manned by the military establishment of Pakistan. Pakistan effectively worked along with the CIA in changing the region as well as changing the mindset of the moderate Afghan and Pakistani societies. Whatever we are

facing today is the bitter fruit of this tree we planted in the 70s. TTP is nothing just a form of the Mujahedeen of the 70s and the Afghan Taliban of the 90s having the same philosophy and quest of destroying an established state and its army the only difference is that the target is Pakistan and the Pakistan army instead of Afghanistan and its former Soviet state.

We were told by the state institutions that the Red Army of the former Soviet Union ran away from Afghanistan by leaving a huge cache of arms worth billions of USD behind Amudarya. However, things were otherwise. Background talks with former military men of the former Soviet Union suggest that the decaying Communist era decided in principle to leave almost all weapons within Afghanistan and ordered its soldiers just to carry one gun and vehicles to take them out from the land of blood and destruction—Afghanistan. Therefore, Red Army by design left thousands of T-52 tanks, Mi-22 light helicopters, BM-21 Grad (moveable rocket launching pad), assault rifles like AK-47s, and millions of live bullets and RPGs behind in Afghanistan. Some former Soviet military officers claim that the decision was taken in politburo to leave weapons in Afghanistan so Afghans would have toys (weapons) to play with for the next three to four decades and keep destroying not only their country but Pakistan also played a pivotal role in defeating Red Army.

Former generals of the Red Soviet Army claim that the Soviet Union had a firm belief that radical extremists equipped with Soviet-made AK-47s would change the social fabric of Pakistan right after the departure of the Red Army because Afghans would start selling their weapons to private hands in Pakistan. However, Soviet Army thought that Pakistan Army could buy rocket launchers, BM-21 Grad, MI22, and tanks from Afghan Mujahedeen but it never happened and Pakistan Army never thought about this.

What has happened, it has happened and we must move forward because there is no reverse gear in history. What we can do to safeguard our interests is the most important

concern for people like me who had been covering Afghan issues for half of their ages.

I believe that all stakeholders, particularly those who had been crying and protesting that “TTP is back” should be taken into confidence by the state and the political leadership must debate in the parliament who started negotiations with TTP and on what conditions this new phase of dialogue was initiated.

The state has never taken the public into confidence over the Afghan issue in the last 43 years but I believe we must do it now---

Article was published on December 25 2022

Terrorism and the State Institutions

Economically in the Intensive Care Unit (IUC), socially and politically in a chaotic phase after Project Imran backfired and thereafter was abandoned; Pakistan is again trying hard to kill the multi-headed serpent of terrorism.

Pakistan fought against terrorism effectively through Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* which was followed by Operation

Radd-ul-Fasaad. Everybody who has an interest in security dynamics knows the foreground, background, and result of these operations, therefore there is no need to go into detail about them. The results were positive and security forces almost cleaned the country and Pakistan became a normal state to live in. However, it was short-lived and we saw things were not normal as the state was telling us by the end of 2020. Tehrik Taliban Pakistan (TTP) slowly but surely started coming back to Afghan-Pakistan border areas and then the situation became out of control by the beginning of the year 2022 when Swat Valley made an SOS call through huge public protests against the TTP regrouping.

However, the state had been telling them there was no need to worry and some TTP members had arrived back from Afghanistan to rejoin their families. This regrouping was apparently the result of talks Pakistan initiated with the TTP on the advice of the Afghan Taliban. The public had no option just to accept what the state was doing and what the state was claiming. Censorship during the PTI era discouraged independent journalists from reporting the situation from the ground and TTP reclaimed areas it lost during several military operations in Swat Valley as well in the erstwhile FATA region.

I have reasons to believe that the PTI government did not take security as a top priority and institutions that were responsible for follow-ups and keeping an eye on the situation like NACTA and the office of the National Security Advisor (NSA) to the Prime Minister almost non-operational. Without going into details about what happened in the past 40 years, we understand that after the massacre of children in Army Public School Peshawar on December 16, 2014, the state understood that the sword that was cast and crafted in the Jihad era of the mid-1970s was now slaughtering their own children and was not confined only to common people; so the state decided to think otherwise and the National Action Plan (NAP) was formed and it was decided that the National Counter Terrorism Authority

(NACTA) that was formed in 2009 would be monitoring authority of the NAP.

A revised NAP was formulated by NACTA and approved by the government in 2021. Now, the revised NAP is the main pillar of the government's policy initiatives against extremism and terrorism. What NACTA is doing can be judged by the fact that it has no independent cadre and it borrows staff and resources from other departments. According to the term of reference of NACTA, it is a federal authority to formulate counter-terrorism and counter-extremism strategies. NACTA is responsible for doing research about the causes of extremism and terrorism, publishes it periodically, and makes liaisons with international bodies to facilitate cooperation in relevant fields.

In reality, NACTA has no contact with the media, no regular briefings given to media about threats and scope of work, and no information on what NACTA has done so far since the latest wave of terrorism that started last October. You can find in the record the last annual report which is the annual report for 2020. You can find the "NACTA Watch" for June 2020 and June 2021. You cannot find any Pakistan Journal of Terrorism Research on the NACTA website though I believe they uploaded one in June 2020.

Meanwhile, the National Action Plan (NAP) looks as if it has been napping since 2018 if you talk about initiatives taken by the provinces to mitigate terrorism. In simple words, nothing concrete is done by civilian authorities to control terrorism in Pakistan, and as a result, we are facing the rise of the TTP again in Pakistan.

Once upon a time, there was an office of National Security Advisor (NSA) to the Prime Minister in Pakistan and I remember that this office used to work as a link among security organizations, media men, think tanks, academicians, and writers. Once headed by Lt. Gen (retd) Nasser Janjua, who fought and won the war against terrorism and against separatists in Baluchistan, used to hold deliberations, background discussions, seminars,

talks, and conferences to get maximum input from the public and to get feedback as well as suggestions.

General Janjua knew the currents and undercurrents and threads of terrorism in Pakistan because he also served in Swat and led operations against terrorism, and his successful handling of Swat operations was the reason that the then Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif placed him in Baluchistan as Commander XII Corps, also known as Quetta Corps because Baluchistan was burning and separatists were gaining a stronghold. There is no need to go into details about the successes of General Janjua because his work had been appreciated by friends and foes and he became a buddy of youth and common people who were victims of terrorism and he left Baluchistan as the most trusted friend of Balochi's. He was a "catharsis center" for everybody who was a victim or concerned about extremism in Baluchistan.

In one of his interviews with this writer, he said believed in seeking closure of conflict instead of winning it because he does not want to give a sense of losing to anybody who is a stakeholder in the issue. His desire to make Balochistan a hub of economic activity by making Balochistan a focal point for trade activities is known to everybody. He resigned on 27 June 2018, when Pakistan had as caretaker Prime Minister Mr. Justice (retd) Nasir-ul-Mulk.

Many friends had been asking him the reasons for his resignation that he never shared with anybody, but I could feel that the system was not ready to accept a straightforward and blunt person after Mian Nawaz Sharif was removed. I could also smell that former COAS Gen Qamar Bajwa had not had very cordial interaction with him. After the removal of Mian Nawaz Sharif from the PM Office, General Janjua was confined to his office practically with no resources, staff, or desire for civil and military leadership to utilize his expertise. He wanted to work but the state had something else in its mind.

We thereafter saw that the office of NSA had been non-operational till Moeed Yusuf was brought from the USA to hold this sensitive seat and he failed to get trust and

respect from regional stakeholders like the central Asian republics as well as from the then Afghan leadership. He might have had no connection with people on the ground therefore his work looked just on the surface.

I am of the view that there is a dire need of revamping the entire system responsible to manage terrorism-related issues if the multiparty government is really serious to mitigate the non-serious and nonsensical strategy the PTI government had about the issue of clamping terrorism in Pakistan.

Article was published on Jan 2, 2023

The “Season of Confessions”

A retired Lt General in his latest article wrote that 2022 was an arduous year — perhaps one of the worst in Pakistani history. Yes, he is truly right if we watch events with military lookout because the reputation of the military is put at stake after so many people spilled so many beans

including the former COAS Gen (retd) Qamar Bajwa about what the military had been doing with Pakistan by manipulating domestic events through political engineering. Whatever Gen (retd) Qamar Bajwa had said about the role of the army in Pakistani politics was facts by the majority of people but now the facts sheet had been stamped by a former military chief.

The year 2022 was a blessing for the country except for floods that destroyed over 33 percent agricultural land of Pakistan since almost everybody is exposed by everybody who was hand in glove just before April 2022.

Everyone who has an interest in the politics and the history of Pakistan knows what the Army Generals had been doing with this country since the first assembly was sent home and the first martial law was clamped. By defeating Māder-e Millat (Mother of the Nation) who was a sister of Quaid e Azam—the Father of the nation in the Presidential elections of 1965, the military understood that everything could be achieved with the stick that every army chief carries in his hands.

There is nothing new about what Imran Khan has been claiming and accusing the army for. Since Imran Khan was granted the status of '*Sadiq*' and '*Ameen*' (honest and righteous) by the Supreme Court of Pakistan therefore his allegations against Gen (retd) Bajwa and his team for planning to kill Imran are a serious issue and must be addressed. Khan also claimed that he wanted to snub corruption in Pakistan but the former Chief always stopped his (Imran's) attempts to eliminate corruption.

While former COAS is blaming Khan for the economic meltdown the country is facing today. I believe both ex-partners are spilling half-truths (although there is no such thing as a half-truth if we talk about the philosophical theory of truth) and half-truth still lies inside them. Both are washing dirty linen in public and God knows for how long they would continue this practice. At least any of them should share who was behind granting the status of '*Sadiq*' and '*Ameen*' to Imran.

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan had not contested some of his audio leaks including one with a lady from Kalabagh district. This alleged audio leak tells us what kind of man was chosen for making a *Riyasat-i-Madina* in Pakistan. Benefactors and the beneficiary are throwing filth on each other's faces and politicians who are painted as corrupt, illiterate, and incompetent are enjoying reading tales of alleged corruption and moral bankruptcy of "larger than life and stronger than state" elements.

I personally believe Project Imran was a disaster for the country but the closure of this project has become a disaster for those who consider they are always right and know every situation better than anybody. Gen Ayub used to say that he knew how to handle bloody politicians and then he had to resign when the student movement put him inside his guarded Army House.

Once Gen (retd) Yahya Khan claimed in his interview with a foreign journalist that he knew the realities of former East Pakistan as clearly as he knew his palm. within four months after this interview, Dhaka fell down like a house of cards. Gen Ziaul Haq used to consider himself the best friend of the United States in south Asia and then his C-130 was blown in the air still facts are under thick fog who was behind this mango bust but the country is still facing the burden of radicalization he injected into the society and now his crafted Mujahedeen had given birth to their third generation in the form of TTP. Gen (retd) Musharraf was also known for his confidence and he used to say he knew Pakistan more than anybody now he cannot live in Pakistan as he is a fugitive in many court cases but his gift of terrorism is still strangulating the country.

In one of my previous articles I already mentioned that the political history of Pakistan is full of allegations and events; indicating how chiefs of the Pakistan Army were allegedly involved in political engineering and stealing elections. Madr-e-Millat (Mother of the Nation) Fatima Jinnah lost the 1965 elections against the then Chief of Pakistan Army Ayub Khan through post-election rigging and manipulation

of the electoral college and Gen Ayub Khan got himself elected as the President of Pakistan.

After 1965, Pakistan went for elections in 1970. These elections were the first general elections held in Pakistan (East and West Pakistan) on an adult franchise basis. One person One vote power was too strong for the Establishment to get results of its choice. Awami League of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman emerged as the majority. He was the same man who supported Fatima Jinnah against Ayub Khan in the 1965 election and served as chief election officer of Fatima Jinnah in East Pakistan. Mujib was arrested two weeks before the election, charged with sedition, and jailed for a year by Gen Ayub Khan.

West-Pakistan-centric establishment headed by Gen Yahya Khan was not ready to transfer power to East-Pakistan-centric Awami League and then a series of events resulted in the Fall of Dhaka. Supplementary Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report is the best available document that tells what happened actually in 1970-71. Its primary conclusion was very critical of the role of Pakistan's military interference in politics, the misconduct of politicians as well as the intelligence failures which permitted the infiltration of Indian agents all along the borders of East Pakistan. In 2000, some parts of the Report were leaked to Indian and Pakistani newspapers. After the leaks, the government decided to public Supplementary Report therefore the original report is still in the files of "Top Secret".

After the Fall of Dhaka, the next general elections took place in 1977 which were followed by the clamping of 11 yearlong Martial Law of Gen Ziaul Haq who held a referendum on 19 December 1984, and voters were asked whether they supported Zia-ul-Haq's proposals for amending several laws in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah, whether they wanted this process to continue, and whether they supported the Islamic ideology of Pakistan. Official results declared it was approved by 98.5% of voters, with a turnout of 62.2%. Ziaul Haq held 1985 Party-less elections to legitimize his rule and became President

through the then Parliament which had no political party sitting on the floor of the House.

Next Party-based General Elections were held in Pakistan on 16 November 1988 after the death of Ziaul Haq and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), led by the late Benazir Bhutto won 94 of the 207 seats in the National Assembly. Her government survived only two years and she was deposed by then-President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and the country went for another general election in 1990. Islami Jamhoori Ittihad (IJI) (Islamic Democratic Alliance) was formed to defeat Benazir Bhutto and the decision of the Asghar Khan case in Supreme Court briefs readers how the then Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan Army General Mirza Aslam Beg formed and used IJI to steal votes for Mian Nawaz Sharif?

Between 1990 to 2018, the country documented political Ping-Pong, and Nawaz Sharif, Benazir Bhutto, and her party were sent home sometimes through the 8th amendment, sometimes through courts, and once through a corporate-sector kind of Martial Law because Gen (retd) Musharraf did not like the word "Martial Law Administrator" so he coined diction "Chief Executive" of the country.

There was also nothing new in General Elections 2018 and allegations of stealing election through pre-poll maneuverability and engineering, polling day rigging, and post-election RTS fiasco raised several questions. Project Imran was placed in KPK, Punjab as well as in the Centre.

According to the last available reports, the military has decided to refrain from political engineering but no action would be taken against those who had been defying the constitution of 1973 till February 2021—the date former COAS cited as the last month military had been manipulating political moves. I believe the military should focus on the rehabilitation of its reputation which is possible only through action not only resolve that it would refrain from playing as the third team in political arenas.

Article was published on Jan 8, 2023

Politicians surrender to bureaucrats

On January 19, 2023, in response to the Lahore High Court's (LHC) directive to provide details with regards to Toshakhana gifts, the PMLN-led Federal Government excused itself from complying with the orders, arguing that it may lead to damaging Pakistan's foreign relations. Trust me PTI is not in the Federal Government and the answer has been submitted by the PMLN-led PDM government.

The case of Toshakhana gifts received and sold by former Prime Minister Imran Khan had been a blockbuster series run by anti-PTI elements since Khan was voted out from PM Office last April. In the last nine months, the entire Paradigm of Khan's corruption was placed by the PDM government on two major cases--- Toshakhana gifts and the Al-Qadir University land issue. Interestingly PMLN-led Federal Government had successfully dismantled the Toshakhana gifts case against Imran Khan by submitting the same reply the PTI government submitted to Islamabad High Court. More interestingly, a reply is written by the same group of bureaucrats who helped Imran Khan to place Toshakhana allegedly at the mercy of private people like Farah Gogi who could take state gifts worth millions of dollars out of the country for selling them in the international market.

In Lahore High Court, Federal Government argued that "The Right of Access to Information (RTI) Act, 2017", also provided exemption from disclosure of the information that pertained "to the personal privacy of an individual, the information declared as classified by the minister-in-charge of the federal government and the information whose disclosure may cause damage to the interests of Pakistan in the conduct of international relations."

The reply of the Federal Government is contrary to the decisions and observations of the Pakistan Information

Commission giving in Rana Ibrar Khalid vs the State of Pakistan case. After this reply, the PMLN-led PDM has virtually lost moral grounds to grill Imran Khan in the Toshakhana gifts case. The second important alleged corruption case against Imran Khan promoted in the media was the Al-Qadir University land case that is no more in the media nowadays because PMLN circles look shy to raise this case in the media and political circles claim that reason for the mysterious silence is the alleged involvement of a business tycoon in this saga.

The journalist Rana Ibrar Khalid who raised the Toshakhana gifts case claims that he is not living a normal life since he raised Toshakhana gifts and he had been the subject of state suppression and repression since then. Even after passing nine months in government, PDM parties have not taken any action against those who victimized Rana Ibrar Khalid financially as well as psychologically because they are members of the permanent state--- the bureaucracy.

The submission of the Federal government statement in the Lahore High Court over the Toshakhana gifts case left Rana Ibrar Khalid and many such journalists in lark who try to raise their voices against injustice. They have reasons to believe that they are doing a futile exercise of risking their lives to stand against the state-sponsored alleged corruption. Asad Ali Toor and many more journalists who faced state-sponsored purges during Imran Khan had no clue why the sitting government is shy to take people to task who followed and executed illegal orders of Khan's regime willfully.

Pakistan has become one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists who face subjugation from the state as well as individuals and groups. As many as 42 journalists were murdered across Pakistan during the last four years and a total of 55 accused were nominated for their killings. PTI government would be remembered for the maximum number of killings of journalists in its 42-month era. 15 journalists were killed in Punjab, 11 in Sindh, 13 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 03 in Baluchistan. No accused has been punished in any of the 42 cases;

indicating that getting away is very simple after killing a journalist in Pakistan and it makes hardly any difference who is in government because the government in Pakistan is in the hands of “bureaucrats”, while politicians behave as second fiddle and every bureaucrat covers up his/her cadre whenever the situation arises.

The reply of the Federal Government in the Lahore High Court on the Toshakhana gifts case is not a simple move for anybody—neither for Imran Khan nor for the PMLN government. After this reply PMLN-led government has already lost moral justification to abuse Imran in this case and cannot raise this issue in any election campaign in the future while Imran Khan got a huge moral win by stating that I am not the only nude in the public bath.

In the journalistic circles of capital, the majority of talks revolve around the proposition that the sitting government looks like an extension of Imran Khan’s era because the government is run by over 90 percent same bureaucrats who were the choice of Project Imran. Journalists who are inclined to PDM parties look worried that what narrative they will have now to target Khan during possible by-elections in KPK and Punjab. Even general elections are due this year and anti-PTI parties have no strong narrative against Khan after slipping chances over playing Toshakhana and Al-Qadir University issues.

There is a saying that power has its own dimensions and mechanism and power knows what suits it. I agree but there are two popular versions of political power. One is gaining and retaining political power through manipulation and the second version is gaining and retaining political power through leadership.

Once I read in a book that a bad leader has the capacity to paralyze a team more than a coward and he/she is the one who avoids difficult issues and buys loyalty by saying yes to anyone and any idea. The Webster's Dictionary defines the word coward when used as a noun, as “a person who lacks courage in facing danger, difficulty, opposition, pain, etc.; a timid or easily intimidated person.”

Homer the Greek philosopher, historian, and poet says in book 9 of 'The Iliad' the same honor waits for the coward and the brave - death but everyone is remembered for death with glory or death with the same of being a coward. Homer says that both go down to Death, the fighter who shirks, the one who works to exhaustion.

I believe PDM leadership understands the risk and the cost of an imaginable defeat in forthcoming general as well as by-elections for having no strong narrative against Imran Khan. Such defeat would be the last one for Parliamentarians at the hands of a person who has a clear idea of how to get rid of the parliamentary system----Imran Khan.

That man is not truly brave who is afraid either to seem or to be, when it suits him, a coward. Edgar Allan Poe

Article was published on Jan 22, 2023

Pride is prerogative while fatal pride is dangerous

Pakistan is dangerously heading toward economic default. This country is so rich that it forgets how much recoverable money is pending to receive from those it sold its assets decades ago.

Recently, an investigative report published in an English daily claimed that audited documents prepared by the Board of Privatization Commission (BPC) of Pakistan showed that receivables from privatization stand at Rs 5.2 billion. However, the document did not mention the Rs163 billion in receivables from a UAE-based company.

The privatization program started in 1991 and 142 entities have either been sold or had their shares divested in return for Rs649 billion. About 25% of the proceeds, however, remain outstanding.

According to the report around Rs5.2 billion were outstanding from 13 parties as on June 30, 2022. Of the Rs5.2 billion, the maximum amount of Rs4 billion was outstanding to one Group.

The newspaper claimed that the document does not mention the outstanding dues of \$799.3 million against a Dubai-based company while this amount was mentioned in a previous receivable report, prepared during the tenure of the Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf (PTI).

We remember that during Gen Musharraf's era, Pakistan privatized assets even without receiving 50 percent of the total bid amount, and assets were handed over to companies. This was like Pakistan on sale kind of attitude however those assets that are great liabilities like Pakistan Steel Mills, Pakistan International Airlines, etc were not sold and only those were sold who were earning sons of the motherland.

In December 2018, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Privatization directed the privatization

ministry to send 14 cases to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for recovery of Rs82.3 billion worth of outstanding dues from various parties including the Dubai-based Etisalat group. The Standing Committee on Privatization was informed that Rs82.32 billion remained outstanding, some of the amount from more than 25 years. However, nothing was done for recovery, and because the majority of sales were done during the Musharaf era who was in uniform how could anybody ask any question of him or do anything for a person who is (was) in uniform?

We understand there is an unwritten code in Pakistan that no action whatsoever for anything would be taken against anybody who wears or wore the uniform in Pakistan because the "Hubris", or fatal pride of the uniform will fall into danger. This is one of the reasons that no action has ever been taken against men in uniform who meddled with the future of the country by manipulating the political process. Meanwhile, slowly but surely state-sponsored intellectuals and writers well managed to blur several universal ideas to justify what men in uniform did with Pakistan.

I teach at a university and I have checked that almost 100 percent of my students in class think that the Army is one of the State Pillar. Slowly but surely and less than 10 percent of our youth today know that the three pillars of the State are the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary.

I know there is only one pillar of the State which is the Army practically and the Judiciary like Justice Munir to Justice Moolvi Mushtaq followed whatever instruction came from the GHQ and the Legislature always played their role whenever they were needed like the last extension of the Army chief and Executive, of course, could not dare to say No to the instruction. Therefore, practically Pakistan is One Pillar State---The Army.

I firmly believe that the 1973 Constitution needs holistic changes and the European-borrowed concept of a Three-Pillar State must be changed to One-Pillar State because this change would rectify anomalies of all three so-called

State Pillars to fix the questions students of Political Sciences, History, and Journalism usually ask me. This change is also utmost for the security of the country because we know no nation can survive its sovereignty without having a strong Army and we have seen what happened in Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan in the recent past where their armies were dismantled and then their sovereignties were stripped off from them.

Since “Hubris”, or fatal pride of our Army is an important and sensitive matter for the country so there is no harm to satisfy hubris by granting whatever role it wishes and whatever changes deem fit to men in uniform. There is nothing more important than the sovereignty of the country and words like Parliament, Constitution, and Democracy are useless if the sovereignty of the country is in danger.

One can contest me that Army’s pride is not “Hubris” but a usual pride every Army on earth enjoys. I could accept this point if I could have seen that the institution of the Army ever stayed away from individuals who played havoc with Pakistan like Gen Ziaul Haq and Gen Musharraf and some instances in the recent past where individuals manipulated the political process of the country overtly because they knew nobody could question them as their institution was behind their back.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan recently named four characters blaming them for hatching conspiracy against the PMLN government since the year 2013. Two of them had been in uniform. The same two names were raised by former Prime Minister Nawaz Nawaz Sharif when he was disqualified by the courts. However, his party was proactive in providing an extension to one of them when a law was moved in Parliament; reemphasizing that all other pillars of the State stand with whatever the one real pillar of the state decides. Therefore, enjoying and feeling extraordinary pride is justified by this one pillar. Conversely, sometimes this pride surpasses and enters into the category of “fatal pride---- Hubris”.

In classical mythology, hubris was considered a very dangerous shortcoming; it was an act of arrogance, usually where the hero attempted to assume godlike status. The gods of Greek mythology did not look favorably on mortals who overstepped or bragged a bit too much! The ancient Greeks considered hubris a fatal flaw that brought tragedy upon heroes... and commonly led to their death. The punishment for hubris was often a shocking reminder of human limitations and mortality. As such, hubris was a prime topic of Greek tragedy. The story of the most Legendary Greek Hero Bellerophon is popular to remind us that pride lies only with omnipotent divine power.

Bellerophon was proud of himself for taming the winged horse named Pegasus who could take him to places that others only dreamed of. His command of flying wherever he wished instigated him to see Olympus, the home of the Greek gods, and so he urged Pegasus to fly higher and higher and higher....

The gods didn't like that. To them, Bellerophon was clearly overstepping his place as one of the mortal Greek heroes. They sent a fly to sting Pegasus, so the horse jumped, throwing Bellerophon many miles to the ground. Bellerophon was not killed, as the gods wished for him to suffer further. Instead, he was crippled and left to wander the earth in search of his beloved Pegasus. Alas, Pegasus never returned to him.

Pride is right but fatal pride is dangerous is the result we got from mythologies as well as from history.

Article was published on Jan 29, 2023

The Parliament and the Superclass

With a big bang terrorism is back again in Pakistan and the sacrifices of over 80,000 innocent people have gone down the drain and we are standing where we were in early 2013. Our sons in uniform who gave their lives in anti-terrorism operations have the right to ask from their graves that did they sacrificed their souls to reinstall terrorists into Pakistan. Their questions can include why they left their families by choice at the mercy of monsters who had been invited back to live in Pakistan.

On February 3, 2023, an Apex meeting was held in Peshawar to review the law and order situation in the country after the massacre of over 100 people who were praying in Police Line mosque, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was questioning, who relocate terrorists from Afghanistan to Pakistan?

Do we not remember that the Parliament was briefed when the PTI-led government invited terrorists back to Pakistan and briefings were given by former COAS and former DG ISI to politicians including Shehbaz Sharif? PMLN is blaming former Prime Minister Imran Khan to reinvent terrorism by rehabilitating terrorists in Pakistan while Imran Khan is naming the former Chief of Pakistan Army and the former DG ISI for this action. We know that whosoever was responsible for this reckless action would never be questioned. Therefore, wasting the time in raising such useless questions that had answers within them must be avoided and we must move forward. We always move forward by forgiving and forgetting what had happened to

us and who was responsible for our disasters. We are a very resilient nation indeed.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on February 2, 2023, informed parliamentarians that the PTI-led government after the Fall of Kabul sent a message to the then opposition (now the government) that “talks could be held with terrorists”. Khawaja Asif claimed that nevertheless briefings were given by the then COAS and the then DG ISI but meetings had remained “inconclusive” and politicians were only informed about the decisions that had already been taken and parliament never endorsed decisions. I can only be sorry that a Defence Minister is asking parliament who should be held accountable for the bloodshed nowadays Pakistan is facing.

Khawaja Asif raised questions that must be answered by Khawaja Asif himself as the Defence Minister and by his colleague Foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari because Khawaja Asif asked the parliamentarians that are we sovereign or are we a mortgaged nation. He is also not clear about who is taking decisions in the country.

Khawaja Asif while remembering Ziaul Haq's era mentioned that Pakistan provided services to the US on rent for fighting Afghan Jihad against Russian troops.

Khawaja Asif's questions are appropriate but he knows he cannot hold anybody accountable because the powerful do not like to answer what they do and they are not answerable to anybody. Questioning someone is possible when you have at least some status and some leverage of power that is being enjoyed by someone you are questioning. How can civilian parliament ask anything from anybody that is all-powerful and supreme elite?

David Rothkopf, an American scholar in his famous book “Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making”, writes that the network of business, government, military and cultural elites are redefining power in the global era. He is of the view that each one of them is over a million and they run our governments, our largest corporations, the powerhouses of international finance, the media, and, from the shadows, the world's

most dangerous criminal and terrorist organizations and they are the global superclass, and they are shaping the history of our time. You can disagree with him but questions he raises in his book need thoughtful introspective behavior to understand that somehow or other, his viewpoint cannot be just thrown away.

He discusses commonalities among partners of the superclass and their common approach to controlling their own countrymen. His more important question is who sets the rules for a group that operates beyond national laws? The answer to his question needs in-depth investigation and this superclass that also controls aids and funds needed for research organizations would never allow working on this in-depth investigation. Meanwhile, the corporate media which is a soft-powered tool of the superclass redirects such questions toward poor, powerless, and orphan democracies. Many of today's corporate sector-sponsored thinkers and researchers say democracy is responsible for every ill in Pakistan because politicians are corrupt, incompetent, outdated, and work as the second fiddle to the superclass. These allegations are not unfounded because the superclass tailors the system where only hand-picked and chosen one can reach the political institutions that are responsible for decision-making. Remember former Prime Minister Imran Khan who had been selling the dreams of sharing political opportunities with the working class fielded only electable candidates in the 2018 general elections. Now he claims that others were taking decisions for his party as well as his government.

Our democracy is a legacy of Greek and Roman political systems where state-friendly philosophers like Plato and Aristotle favored a kind of democracy that could ensure "the rule by the best over the rest, an aristocracy based on merit rather than blood". Aristotle also said that a good monarchy was better than a democracy. Aristotle's criticisms of democracy were often insightful and farsighted.

His key objection to democracy was that it undermined the rule of law while a functioning state requires that laws govern everything. Aristotle might understand that the superclass had resources and means to subjugate poor and weak politicians and it is difficult to control rich and powerful monarchies. Anyhow this is a long discussion of what Aristotle thoughts about democracy and what kind of monarchy he promoted. Aristotle wanted the “rule by the best over the rest”. Do we find the best around us? The best are those who have the skill to acquire power and resources and they obviously are part of a superclass.

If all best become superclass and they rule the rest, then history tells us societies go through drastic changes and nature finds some way to free “rest” from the “best” because, without this natural course, there is nothing to stop those who hold the most power doing what they want and tyrannizing everyone else.

While finishing my degree in Political Philosophy, I extensively read German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel because his ideas influence generations to come since his death in 1831. He believes that “Rulers, Statesmen, Nations, are used to be emphatically commended to the teaching which experience offers in history. But what experience history has taught is - that people and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it”.

Article was published on Feb 6, 2023

Nation hanging over transmission lines

The energy sector of Pakistan has been in a circular debt trap for a long and IMF Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement also indicates that the country must cap its circular debt through the 'Circular Debt Management Plan' (CDMP). Total circular debt is around 1400 billion rupees and the immediate decrease of circular debt demanded by IMF is around 952 billion rupees.

Dependence on thermal energy and victim of the fossil fuel mafia, Pakistan is facing today what we had planned in the early 90s. There is a long story about how multinationals with the help of bureaucracy made fools of politicians for restructuring WAPDA in 1992. I was covering WAPDA as a beat Reporter in the 90s and still remember that land losses in 1992-95 were around 12 percent while the government with a single stroke of bureaucratic pen allowed Independent Power Producers (IPPs) to enjoy 18 percent land losses. We must remember that burden of line losses come to consumers who pay for line losses, not the IPPs or the government.

The WAPDA's Strategic Plan 1992, re-structured WAPDA and only Hydel generation remained with WAPDA, and its other functions were unbundled. Several public sector entities were installed including Transmission and Dispatch Companies (NTDCL), Distribution Companies (DISCOs), and Generation Companies (GENCOs). The private Power and

Infrastructure Board (PPIB) was established in 1994 to provide one window facility to Independent Power Producers (IPPs). The above-mentioned arrangements provided huge opportunities for the District Management Group (DMG) group now known as the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) group for their lucrative salaries and controlling the entire power structure of Pakistan and minimizing the role of practitioners and experts like public sector engineers. Private Sector Power Generation (PSPG) was inducted in Pakistan in 1994. These bureaucrats were now in a position to deal with a forthcoming lot of independent private power producers and a regulatory body namely NEPRA was created in 1997 where the DMG/PAS group endured a monopoly.

Since these arrangements, nothing is in the hands of politicians, and the federal ministry and minister were made puppets of what the above-mentioned authorities decide. Since IPP was a lucrative commercial activity for everybody linked with this business, therefore hydel sector was totally ignored and next two decades nothing was done to plan for hydel energy resources.

By the year 2022, the share of Thermal was over 69 percent Hydro was 27% and renewable energy share stands at 3.15%.

Since Thermal power generation is in far-flung areas therefore the length of transmission lines extended after the 1990s so the line losses increased. Right now 500 kV/220 kV Transmission Lines length is 19,500 km.

In 2015, the PMLN government introduced the “Power Generation Policy 2015” to facilitate private investment in indigenous resources for controlling the import budget of foreign oil for Thermal plants. It must be remembered that according to IPP contracts, it is the responsibility of the government of Pakistan to provide import oil to Thermal plants—that is the reason for circular debt.

Many independent studies indicate that one of the major causes of the increase in energy unit price to consumers is line losses. In the financial year 2021-22, the amount of power lost during transmission by distribution companies

was recorded at 22,298 Gigawatt hours (GWh). In the same fiscal, the financial effect of transmission and distribution losses as a result of the inability to reach National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) goals was also calculated at Rs520.3 billion.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is directing Pakistan to plug unbudgeted Rs675 billion power subsidies with a mix of electricity tariff increases and other revenue-enhancing measures. The government would soon enhance the price per unit which is already around Rs.24 per unit to domestic consumers.

A World Bank-funded "Variable Renewable Energy Integration and Planning Study" indicates that solar and wind power should be urgently expanded to at least 30 percent of Pakistan's total electricity generation capacity by 2030.

Everybody knows that expanding renewable energy will make electricity cheaper and will achieve greater energy security. Installation of solar and wind power facilities is possible with the proximity of the areas where energy supply is needed therefore such facilities would have shorter lengths of energy transmission and line losses would reduce drastically. World Bank study indicates that Pakistan can save import of oil for energy production (Thermal) up to \$5 billion over the next 20 years.

According to another report utilizing just 0.071 percent of the country's area for solar photovoltaic (solar PV) power generation would meet Pakistan's current electricity demand.

Pakistan has several well-known wind corridors and with average wind speeds of 7.87 m/s in 10 percent of its windiest areas; mostly in Baluchistan while solar energy can be produced anywhere in Pakistan. Nevertheless, the installed capacity of solar and wind energy in Pakistan, at just over 1,500 Megawatts, is just 4 percent of total capacity, equal to around 3.5 percent of total generation. Hydel energy is increasing in Pakistan thanks to the CPEC project and Chinese intervention in Pakistan's energy

market. Moreover, the utilization of local coal for Thermal energy production is also increasing.

Anybody who has common sense understands that Pakistan can achieve over 24,000 Megawatts of additional capacity by 2030 if we have coordinated and sustained efforts by both the federal and provincial governments. Major investment is needed in the transmission system, including new automation and control systems, establishing more wind and solar energy facilities, and initiating small-size hydel projects.

Small-size to medium-size hydel projects take 2 to 5 years for production while solar and wind energy can be produced in the shortest possible time. The only need to enhance cheaper energy is the will to achieve it and I am sure the imported fuel mafia would not loosen its grip over the energy sector and we will keep thinking about producing at least 50 percent of our total demand through clean and cheaper energy resources like hydel, solar and wind energy.

Remember Pakistan is the heaven of Mafias.

Article was published on Feb 12, 2023

Spilling the bean and the half-truth

The Indian media, while focusing on the political situation in Pakistan, is highlighting the anti-establishment narrative of former Prime Minister Imran Khan and notes that Khan is allowed to question the military establishment, but that privilege was not granted to any other politician of the country. When former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif, while addressing his workers in Gujranwala, claimed that former COAS Gen Qamar Bajwa and former ISI chief Lt Gen Faiz Hameed were meddling with politics, he was banned from the television screens and he was tagged as a traitor and a stooge of India. Now the same allegations are raised by former PM Imran Khan against General Bajwa but Khan is allowed to say whatever he wishes to say.

Meanwhile, former Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) federal minister Shireen Mazari claimed that General Bajwa wanted to resettle members of the outlawed Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and their families following the Afghan Taliban's takeover of Kabul. She indicated that this was the time when General Faiz Hameed was chief of the ISI, and he was also sitting in the meeting when Bajwa discussed this issue with Imran. Her remarks came when people were blaming her party for inviting terrorists back to Pakistan from Afghanistan and now she is shifting the burden to army leadership. It may be remembered that TTP top leader and spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan managed to escape from military custody in February 2020 when the

PTI was in power and neither the military with whom he was confined nor the then government had ever shared details of his historic escape. A series of his letters published by the UK-based newspaper *Guardian* raised several questions but nobody ever answered his blames and claims.

The PTI-Military conflict has gone to the next level where Imran has demanded President Arif Alvi order an inquiry against the former Gen Qamar Bajwa on charges of allegedly violating his oath by interfering in politics and controlling the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). This is the same allegation Mian Nawaz Sharif put on the former Army leadership and then Mian Nawaz faced wrath in the 2018 elections.

In a letter written to the President on February 14, 2023, Imran Khan requested President Alvi who is also the Supreme Commander of the Pakistan Armed Forces to open an inquiry against the former COAS for admitting that he (Gen Qamar Bajwa) considered Imran Khan 'dangerous for the country' and recorded tapes of his confidential conversations.

Indian politicians, as well as senior journalists and writers, are of the view that Pakistan's situation is worsening day by day, and putting Pakistan as a "campaign ingredient" would actually be giving importance to Pakistan that it does not deserve today. Meanwhile, they indirectly suggest blaming Pakistan for fanning terrorism in the region would benefit India to portray Pakistan as a dangerous country that is becoming more dangerous after its administrative and economic meltdown.

Honestly speaking there is no doubt that Pakistan is melting in the same pot it crafted in the early 1980s for melting its enemies or for earning petro-dollars for people in power. History is ruthless and after almost 40-plus years everybody, irrespective of the political divide, is raising fingers toward a military establishment and blaming it for the social, political, and economic disasters Pakistan is facing today.

On one hand, the PTI demanding an inquiry against the former chief of the Pakistan Army while on the other, Pakistan Muslim League (N) senior vice president Maryam Nawaz is claiming that 'remnants' of former ISI chief General Faiz Hameed were still present in the establishment and supporting Imran. She is also questioning the judiciary and safely but surely dragging the judiciary into whatever benefits Imran Khan is getting in courts.

In an informal conversation with reporters in Lahore, she called upon the judiciary to "hold some individuals accountable" following the emergence of alleged audio leaks of a Supreme Court Judge with former Chief Minister Punjab Ch. Pervaiz Elahi. She claimed that no one had been given as much leniency as Imran Khan got from the judiciary. *"Despite being caught red-handed; no action is being taken against him. There is no greater injustice than the double standards of justice," she remarked.*

On the other hand, skyrocketing price hikes and diminishing economic opportunities are compelling the cowardly and powerless common man to raise questions about the economic cost he is paying for having a military establishment, judiciary, Parliament, and bureaucracy. There is a perceivable difference that I observe, which is that only politicians and Parliament were under corruption charges in yesteryear, but now the public is openly extending the spectrum and other state institutions are in focus.

Moreover, the public is asking what salaries, packages, and even pensions military officials, the judges of the superior judiciary, and bureaucrats are receiving from the public exchequer, for not allowing people to know their tax returns. There are two options available to people in power, one is to open up and share their accounts with the public and the second option is to use more power to snub them for asking such questions. Both are applicable but both would bring results that may not be in their favor.

Article was published on Feb 19, 2023

Too big to fail” and “too big to jail

George Eliot was an English novelist, poet, and journalist of the Victorian era. She is known for the strong lines she used to write in her novels. One of her famous set of lines includes her historic comments about the braveness of humans for losing instead of winning a war. She says:

“Any coward can fight a battle when he's sure of winning, but give me the man who has the pluck to fight when he's sure of losing”.

I think Maryam Nawaz gets inspiration from famous philosophers, writers, and politicians like Eliot who had a firm belief that sometimes losing is actually winning. Maryam’s advice to her uncle, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, is not to care about his government which according

to her is a “leftover” of the previous PTI-led government, and to hold people accountable who are responsible for what Pakistan had been going through in last five years, resulting now a devastated economy and turbulent political weather.

She had given names of the "cabal of five", and according to her understanding, they are behind the current political and economic crises Pakistan is facing. Her direct attack on the cabal of five can end her political career if she gets punished for contempt of court like former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani had. Three out of five persons she accused of undermining the democratic process in the country are enjoying their retirement life and the history of Pakistan testified that nobody would ever try them for anything wrong they had allegedly done when they were in service. Late Gen Musharraf was a fugitive and got a death sentence from a special court in Pakistan but he was laid to rest in Karachi with full national honor and guard of honor. The parliament he suspended performed payers for his departed soul. This is what Pakistan is and we have to accept the realities. Moreover, history confirms that braves are hanged and cowards are awarded then why does Maryam Nawaz wants to be brave? I have no answer.

Political circles are of the view that PDM is not enjoying the government since April 2022 and the only role it has is to face the wrath of the people because of skyrocketing price hikes and a melting economy. PDM would not contest by-elections that would be held in March because it has limited hopes of winning them. Moreover, it would be disastrous for PDM if courts direct the Election Commission of Pakistan to hold elections for provincial assemblies of KPK and Punjab.

PDM circle fear that JUI would be a loser in KPK and PMLN would be in Punjab. Ordering provincial elections in current circumstances would be a “Master Stroke” of a cabal of five against PDM and I believe PDM realizes the situation. PDM leadership believes that before it is thrown into deep sea water without a lifebuoy, the master stroke it can play

is to take off its all guards and build a strong narrative that is needed desperately.

The risk is high to accuse two retired and two sitting judges so Maryam Nawaz is acting as a suicide bomber but she is not alone Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Defence Minister Kh Asif also accused judges of the Supreme Court of being biased against the ruling PML-N and demanded that both should recuse themselves from the cases against party leaders.

An audio leak in which an SC judge is allegedly talking with former Chief Minister Ch Pervaiz Ellahi needs a forensics test because I cannot accept a judge of the Supreme Court could be so reckless that he is not only hiding a wanted person at his residence but also confirming his act on a telephone; informing Ch Pervaiz Ellahi that Muhammad Khan was at his (the judge) residence. We had an audio leak of Justice Abdul Qayyum Malik in past but he tendered his resignation after the Supreme Court termed his conduct 'biased' while deciding an appeal of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto against her conviction in a corruption case. We will see what action SC would take for doing forensic of this audio leak and consequent actions against those who fabricate this audio or against former CM Punjab if the audio is not fake and fabricated. Irrespective of the credibility of this audio, it has provided an opportunity for PDM leadership to raise their fingers against the judiciary and expose the division in the higher judiciary.

One by one; important institutions in Pakistan are facing situations they had never thought of before. Just imagine former and sitting members of powerful institutions are facing accusations but their institutions are still shy to take any action against those who are accusing them without reason or taking action against former or sitting members if they were really involved in misconduct.

People irrespective of the political divide are openly blaming powerful institutions for protecting their sitting or former employees even if they are involved in illegal activities and the burial of former military dictator Musharraf with a guard of honor is enough to understand

that the powerful are beyond any accountability in Pakistan. Today, even a banana seller is talking that elites are real owners of Pakistan while the common citizen is a slave who works to provide taxes for elites to enjoy lavish livings in public sector offices and residences. I strongly believe that all powerful institutions are collaborating with each other and safeguarding each other by following the dual principles that they are “too big to fail” and “too big to jail” so they are neither ready to accept their failures nor ready to face any consequences for whatever transgression they are committing or have already committed against public and the country.

I am of the view that Pakistan has entered into a phase where abuse of power is no more tolerable by the public although the public cannot limit abuse of power, at least the public is now expressing that Pakistan is a model of modern slavery in which the public is a tool to collect and provide taxes to the State and elite institutions are there to enjoy hard-earned money of the public. This realization cannot be handled by selling the idea of “protection of motherland” or by telling people that the public has some duties towards the state. Now public is openly asking what the motherland is providing to the public. Is the public enjoying equal respect, rights, and living standards that an officer of bureaucracy, military, judiciary, and member of parliament is enjoying?

Vladimir Lenin in his book “The State and Revolution” writes that the capitalist State has inherent nature to work as a tool for class oppression and it ensures the social control of the ruling class. He says that even in a democratic capitalist republic, the ruling class never relinquishes political power, maintaining it via the “behind-the-scenes”. Can we decipher “behind-the-scenes” operators?

Article was published on Feb 26, 2023

The state is serving only the State Employees

Last week I had a group call with school friends living abroad for the last three to four decades. Conversation with school fellows is always a blessing because it makes you as young as a 10-year-old boy; at least for some hours —Nostalgia is the biggest reality of middle age. Almost all of my friends were expressing worries about the motherland they left behind and everybody was asking me questions about what would be next as Pakistan according to them; is on the verge of economic collapse.

I had no answer to share with them although I had many overt answers for myself. We have already collapsed morally, and socially and that would later or sooner result in economic collapse. I know I live in a state where thousands of former employees of the State take half a million rupees as their monthly pensions, over one and a half million as monthly salaries and even there are many who take double the figures I mentioned above as monthly salaries and pensions while poor are selling their bodies for Rs. 1000 or so because they do not have anything left to sell.

A video report I recently watched explains prostitution business is throbbing in Lahore, particularly in slum areas. When we probe the situation we find that prostitution is not being opted for money making but rather clearing electricity and gas bills by a large number of strata which has lost hope and opportunities to survive. A single-question survey can be conducted in which you can ask people randomly in street "to whom the state of Pakistan is serving? I believe you will find the majority of answers telling you that the state is working only for state institutions and state employees while the economic opportunities are squeezing every passing day for the 230 million population with over 50 percent youth. Regrettably, our youth is mostly unskilled or semi-skilled so what option is left with it?

I believe that the ongoing census will tell us horrific data about the reality of our social structure (if this census is being done honestly and if its actual report is ever shared with the public). I trust our State knows the reality but it does not want to indulge in fixing or rectifying and it is following the policy of "let people decide themselves". I firmly believe that the State is waiting for an explosion because this is the best option to fix the situation once social collapse completes its natural cycle. We will see how long it will complete the cycle.

As I mentioned above that people think that State is the mother of only state institutions and its employees, I would

share recent news that would give my reader an idea of how the State is working for state employees.

The meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Aviation, on March 3, 2023, found an overpayment of Rs272 billion to Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) pensioners. A special audit was recommended by the committee but I know nothing would come out of this and nobody would try for this mess because they all belong to an all-powerful cadre of society.

The meeting observed the payment of pensions and emoluments to retired employees of the CAA that retired between 2014 to 2015 and 2022 to 2023.

The committee was informed that the said retired employees were supposed to be paid pensions and other emoluments according to the CAA Pay and Pensions Regulations, 2014 (amended 2019); however, instead have been paid according to the Government of Pakistan as per CAA Service Regulations 2000. It was observed that employees were granted pension increases in line with the federal government till 2019. This resulted in an overpayment to CAA pensioners the disbursement of which amounts to PKR 272 billion. Just imagine how the State is working for State employees.

Foreign media claims that Pakistan's external debt and liabilities have virtually reached \$130 billion that according to foreign media is 95.39 percent of Pakistan's GDP.

Pakistani media is conforming that inflation is at its highest in 48 years as food inflation reached 42.9 percent compared to 12.8 percent last year, bringing the country into a severe economic crisis. In these circumstances, the State is ensuring that its kids--- State employees must get more benefits. Since lower staff in the Federal government have access to all documents about what the elite superclass is getting as salaries, perks, privileges, and packages so satisfying the lower staff is an excellent move for bureaucrats before they start sharing data with the public out of their "*Pakistaniat*" so sharing more benefit with them was also the need of the day. In the second week of February 2023, the Finance Division notified

special dispensation for the federal government employees from pay scale 1-15 with retrospective effect, ie, January 1, 2023.

BPS-01 to BPS-05 will be granted two higher pay scales as a one-time dispensation if they have not availed of time scales under timescale policy-2022. BPS-06 to BPS-15 will be granted the next higher scale as a one-time dispensation if they have not availed of time scale under the time scale Policy-2022. Employees in BPS-16 will be granted one additional increment as time dispensation, the post of LDC will be upgraded from BPS-09 to BPS-11 and that of UDC from BPS-11 to BPS-13 along with incumbents, and recruitment rules will be amended by Establishment Division accordingly as per up-gradation policy.

According to an article by Dr. Ishrat Husain titled "3.2 million government employees: Is the bureaucracy too big?", the government employs 3.2 million. Total government expenditure is around 22% of GDP. The strength of government employees in 2009-10 was 2.7 million—federal 0.9 million and provinces 1.8 million. In absolute terms, there has been an addition of 0.4 million over a decade – almost all of it in the provincial governments, which now have 2.2 million employees, or 70% of the total – up slightly from 66% a decade ago. He writes that the wage bill of the four provincial governments was Rs. 350 billion in 2009-10 and has escalated more than four times by 2019-20.

The federal wage bill multiplied 2.9 times during the decade, while the strength, which had actually been on a declining path until 2016, remained unchanged at one million. In 2016/17, the federal government added 116,000 new employees, the majority of whom were in lower-level positions. For the first time since then, there has been a reduction in the number of employees in 2019/20 as a result of the restructuring of the federal government but this reduction is only in lower grades.

Dr. Ishrat Husain says that from a citizen's, perspective, the critical question is what functions these 3.2 million

employees perform in the delivery of basic public goods and services for which they are paid.

While providing break-up of services he indicates that 35% of federal employees are serving in security, and law and order agencies (civilian armed forces such as the Rangers, Frontier Constabulary, police, FIA, Intelligence Bureau, and civilians working at GHQ, PAF, and PN headquarters and establishments), 20% were engaged in the provision of infrastructure services including in Railways, postal services, highways, ports, and aviation. Power generation, transmission, and distribution, and oil, and gas have 18%. The remaining 27% are engaged in social sectors, commercial and trade promotion, tax collection, regulatory, judicial and quasi-judicial (tribunals), training and research, external relations, media relations, parliamentary support, and the Islamabad Capital Territory. A reader is better to judge what kind of services they are providing to a common Pakistani who is serving them with her or his blood and sweat. None of them looks ready to sacrifice for the country by accepting reductions in pensions, salaries, perks, allowances, etc. Why should they sacrifice their packages because the country had readily available 230 million sacrificial heads if ever there is a need for enhancing tax collection?

Article was published on March 5, 2023

Crumbling agriculture in Punjab

There is a saying that literature is the reflection of society. I trust literature reflects the attitude, changes, agonies, honors, tragedies, and collective perception of society.

One of my teachers at Government College Lahore told me in 1984 that literature mirrors the vices of society with a view to make society realize its mistakes and make amends. Some Novel writers typically use characters who, by their words and deeds convey attitudes, morale, and values of the society in which the novel is written. An excellent novel writer has the skill of perceiving the situation in an extraordinary way and shares his perception with his readers.

Last week I attended a review session of a Punjabi novel in Islamabad that was written in reference to the effect and aftermath of Covid-19 on our social fabric.

Written by international award-winning writer Nain Sukh whose short stories and novels got global fame and prizes including the biggest prize in North America the “Dhahan Prize for Punjabi Literature”, the novel covers countless complexities of our society and moves between past and present. His new novel *Vaba Tay Waseeb* (pandemic and locale) is about social and psychological changes the society had gone through during lockdowns.

The discussion over the novel triggered several ideas and covered historical outlook because the writer is habitual in framing every event through social and historical lenses. This discussion triggered many thoughts including how we ruined our natural environments by discouraging our local fauna and flora and planting foreign trees and ornamental plants. Lahore, the jewel of Punjab was known for *Kikar*, (Acacia hydasppica), *Sohanjana* (Moringa), *Bair* (Indian jujube), *Jammu* (Java Plum), *Amrood* (Guava) and *Amb* (Mango), *Sukh Chain* (Millettia pinnata), *Neem* (Azadirachta indica) but now lost almost all of them as they were systematically replaced by foreign fruitless trees by our horticulture department. Fauna and flora are considered an

integral part of the identity of any land which is why anthropologists always document faunas and floras of land under research as they document caste systems, professions, and traits of people. Since I had been covering civic authorities as a Reporter in the past, I can judge that during the last 40 years, over 70 percent of trees in downtown Lahore succumbed to widening roads, urbanization, expansion, and reconstruction of old public buildings. It is a testified fact that flora links with fauna so losing traditional trees and plants is resulting in losing the habitation of traditional faunas in Lahore and my children do not know the sound of a *Qumri* (Eurasian collared dove) or a *Tatiri* (red-wattled lapwing/ large plover). In simple words, we are losing our identity swiftly and we are happy with it.

There is no doubt change is natural as population growth but other societies have the same features they preserve and conserve basic entities of their social identities like faunas and floras but we do not believe in maintaining what we had and conversing such issues are considered useless and irrelevant discussions. Sometimes I ask my intellectual friends what is relevant to us. Some of them believe our existence is the only relevant issue for us, so are we truly living on an animal farm?

The novel covered several other social themes and keeps moving the readers to different aspects of our lives. Like any book of original content, *Vaba Tay Wasaib* brings me several dimensions including the impact of increasing per kilometer population density, squeezing agriculture lands, and decreasing per hectare production due to the massive use of pesticides and bad foreign techniques of farming and agriculture. I consider the above-mentioned factors are *Vaba* (pandemic) of our *Wasaib* (locale) and our environments are infected with 23 million people (tentative figure with normal projection rate after last census) comprising 262 persons per square density rate. If we exclude deserts, mountain masses, and unhabitated areas of Baluchistan then our density is surely over 500

persons per square kilometer with two percent annual population growth.

According to available data documented in 2018 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations Pakistan, 22.1 million hectares are cultivated; the rest of the territory is comprised of culturable waste, densely populated forests, and rangelands and cities. In a real sense, we have 22.1 million productive lands to feed 231 million mouths per year.

According to the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the United States, Punjab is producing 77%, Sindh 15%, KPK 5%, and Baluchistan 3% of wheat while Punjab is producing 52%, Sindh 38%, KPK 2%, and Baluchistan 8% of rice. In the last 30 years, all-out foreign funding and technical support came to KPK for increasing yield but the province had failed to provide results but had been the main route of wheat, rice, and other edibles smuggling to Afghanistan. There is no doubt that the horizontal growth of housing societies is eating the agricultural land of Punjab and Sindh but still, farmers are trying to retain agricultural lands. However, IMF can send another blow to Pakistan by putting pressure on heavy taxation on agricultural lands that can multiply the pace of converting agricultural land into minting machines of housing societies.

Providing such crude but honest data and figures about our realities in a piece about a novel review can be considered inappropriate but I have a rationale for mentioning these figures because I believe we still have writers in Pakistan who can trigger thoughts through fiction because we know that good literature records the real-life events from the society and converts these mundane activities into fiction and presents them to the society as a mirror in which people may look at their own images and make amends wherever necessary. Fascinatingly, Nain Sukh's novel is in Punjabi language and he artfully represents the land, people, and history of Punjab. Jelena Skulskaja, who is a contemporary Russian writer believes that writers are part of their language and not the other way around – people's way of thinking differs from language to language

depending on the structure of the language. I believe *Vaba Tay Waseeb* is fiction that is more than a reality and it connects Punjabi readers with their Punjab on both sides of the political divide.

Article was published on March 13, 2023

Zaman Park battle: The State succumbed to Mob

Losing a battle that lasted for 30 hours in downtown Lahore, the state power surrendered and retreated from the scene without fulfilling its legal duty of arresting former prime minister Imran Khan. Followers of Imran Khan protected him with full force and did not allow to enter his residence at Zaman Park although police and rangers were trying to arrest him under court orders.

This was an excellent example of how a weak state surrenders in front of unruly and charged groups of people. Lahore High Court judge directed the police to withdraw from Zaman Park because he did not want grave law and order situation in Lahore. The DIG Capital Police of Islamabad fainted due to the heavy presence of tear gas in the environment and he was shifted to the hospital over 59 policemen were injured by PTI workers and the scene amicably ended. The former prime minister has over 70 cases registered against him and he had never been arrested in any of the cases because he is protected by his strong followers. Infected he is beyond any law and rule and he is larger than State itself. He was crafted like this by the designers of Project Imran Khan.

Robert Irwin Rotberg is a professor in governance and foreign affairs and he was director of the Program on Intrastate Conflict, Conflict Prevention, and Conflict Resolution at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government for decades. One of his books "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators" is very famous among students of civil administration all over the world. In this book, he says that states fail because of many reasons including losing their legitimacy as an umbrella for protecting the population from social, economic, legal, and physical exploitation of powerful individuals or groups. He believes that weak states fail to control the formation of armed groups and their armament and then mobilization of groups easily defeats law enforcement agencies and that is what we saw in the Lahore fiasco. Police failed to disarm and demobilize Khan's followers who had been attacking law enforcement agencies for over 30 hours, resulting disgraceful withdrawal of forces from the scene.

For a long, we are not investing in training and capacity building of our institutions and we allow privatized security management now this country has only 397,364 policemen while the unofficial/unconfirmed strength of private security guards provided by registered security agencies is over 3.2 million and if we add the strength of unregistered and personal security guards then the figure can jump to 4 million. Figures indicate that individuals and groups are stronger than the State if we talk about security issues. The judicial system has an extremely low strength as the Supreme Court of Pakistan has 17 judges, Lahore High Court has 50, Sindh High Court has 25, Peshawar High Court has 15 and Baluchistan High Court has 6. Districts & Sessions Judges/Senior Civil Judges & Civil Judges are 649 in Punjab, 390 in Sindh, 177 in KPK, and 125 in Baluchistan. When the State power starts squeezing then it becomes easier than before for armed groups to subjugate the state.

Pakistan has a long history of closing its eyes when any armed group flourished rather than the State had been handed in gloves in many cases. Religious, ethnic, and political groups ruled their respective areas of operation for decades and the best example of this was MQM Altaf Hussain. He was needed in the early 80s by Gen Ziaul Haq to control Pakistan People's Party and Jamaat-i-Islami in Karachi so he got state sponsorship. Several Lashkars (religious armed groups) were needed for Afghan Jihad and to snub a particular sectarian group and many of them thereafter targeted Pakistan Army including Lashkar-e-Jhangvi that was behind attacking GHQ in Rawalpindi. The irregular armies and state-sponsored extremists later or sooner stand against the stable state and this is what we had seen in human history, particularly in the Middle East and in Pakistan. Instead of wasting time in detail on what we had seen in the past, we should review the mechanism of how and why the formation or acceptance of armed groups makes the State weaker.

Professor Anna Leander is a sociologist and political scientist and she is currently teaching at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. She in her famous book "Globalisation and the Eroding State Monopoly of Legitimate Violence" writes that bloc interest in politics can cause a kind of warfare and sometimes include vertical, hierarchical command; the importance of the battle, and extremist tendencies. The point of "the importance of battle" was strongly propagated during the Lahore fiasco and it worked well as mentioned by Prof Anna Leander. The message was sent by vertical (Imran Khan himself), was amplified by hierarchical command, and extremist tendencies was converted into power show and attacks on law enforcement agencies. The Inspector General of Punjab Police (IGP) in his press conference claimed that militants were residing inside the residence of former prime ministers who are (were) wanted by law enforcement agencies. Photos of one Iqbal Khan appeared on social

media followed by his statement. Iqbal Khan had been fighting against Pakistan Army in Swat Valley and he was arrested and jailed for over six years. He had been living in Afghanistan and came back to Pakistan when PTI allowed TTP militants to resettle in Pakistan after a deal with militants arranged by the former leadership of the Pakistan Army. Iqbal Khan according to journalists is a leading figure in protecting the former prime minister against law enforcement agencies. Journalists who covered the pitched fight between Khan's followers and police claimed that hardly 20 to 30 percent of followers who were there could belong to Lahore because their outfits and language indicated they were not from Punjab either. If we consider the statement of IGP valid that militants were or are living inside the residence of a former prime minister that is the sheer incompetency of the state institution to let live in the heart of the provincial metropolis. Such minute incidents slowly but surely develop a situation where the State slowly but surely allows extremist groups to take over the situation and encroach the writ of the State. If the State continues to allow ethnic, social, political, and religious groups to use the monopoly of the use of violence that is the only prerogative of the State, then the state later or sooner start crumbling.

"Neither a wise man nor a brave man lies down on the tracks of history to wait for the train of the future to run over him."

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Article was published on March 20, 2023

About Author

Agha Iqrar Haroon is an international award-winning journalist who has been in the field since 1988 and appears in national and international media as an analyst and political scientist. He holds degrees in Masters of Philosophy and Masters of History from Government College Lahore (GCU). He has been teaching in different universities as visiting faculty member.



About Book

Lack of knowledge of history, blind trust in the superclass are two of the main weaknesses of ordinary people in our society. They pay a heavy price for this in the form of subjugation or becoming victims. Regrettably, that trust in the superclass has long been a part of South Asian DNA, and hero worship is an integral part of our semiotic system. Because of this we are constantly in search of a saviour—the hero to safeguard our souls. This “Avatar” later tends to become our subjugator.

“How does Superclass rule Nations?---A Case Study from Pakistan” deals with political and social engineering Pakistan has faced since independence.

